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LAUGHTER OF THE SPHINX





Laughter of the Sphinx

BY

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WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY F. W. STOKES

Artist-Member of the Peary Relief Expedition, 1892, and of the
North Greenland Expedition of 1893-94



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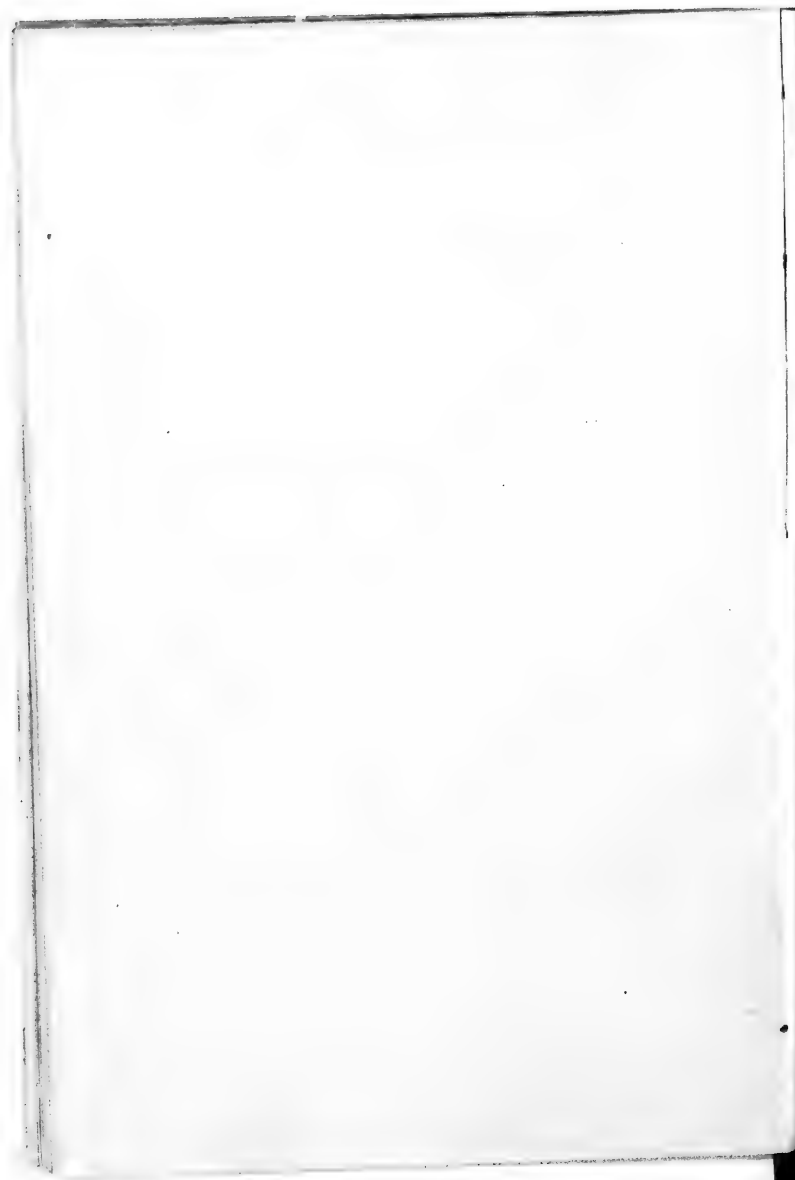
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To the Men who do
not fear the Sphinx

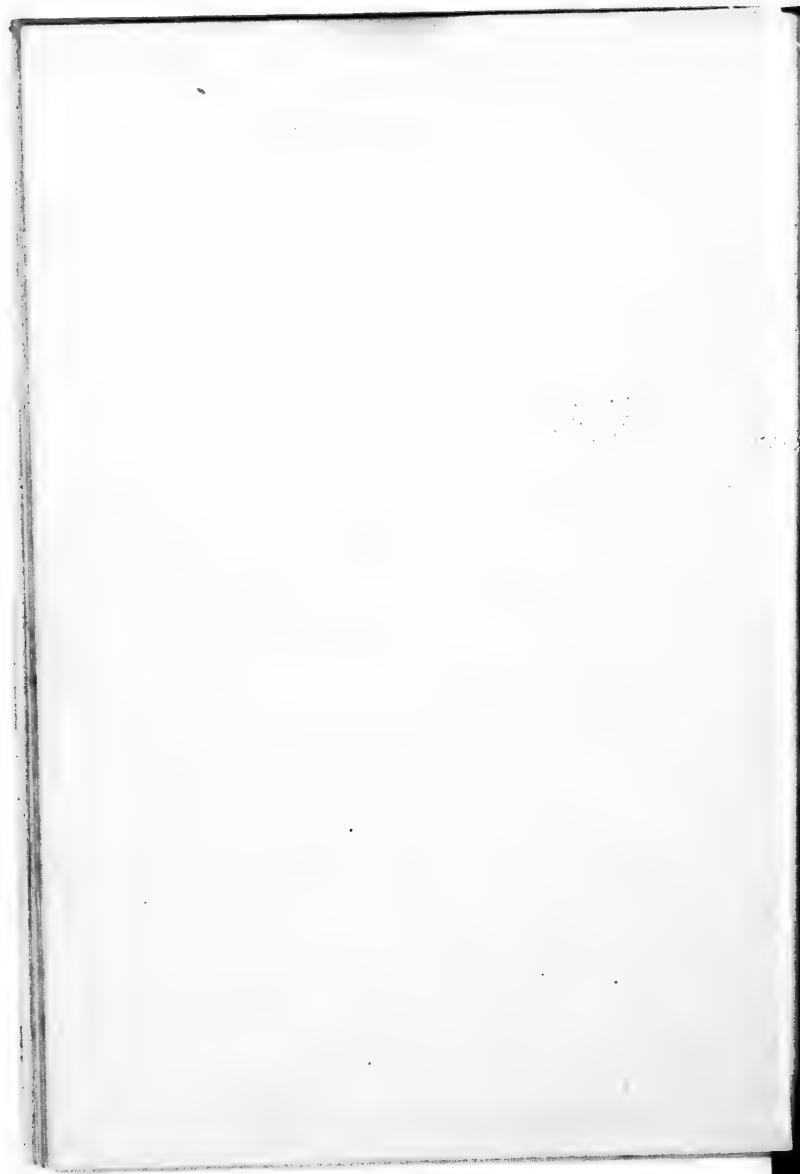


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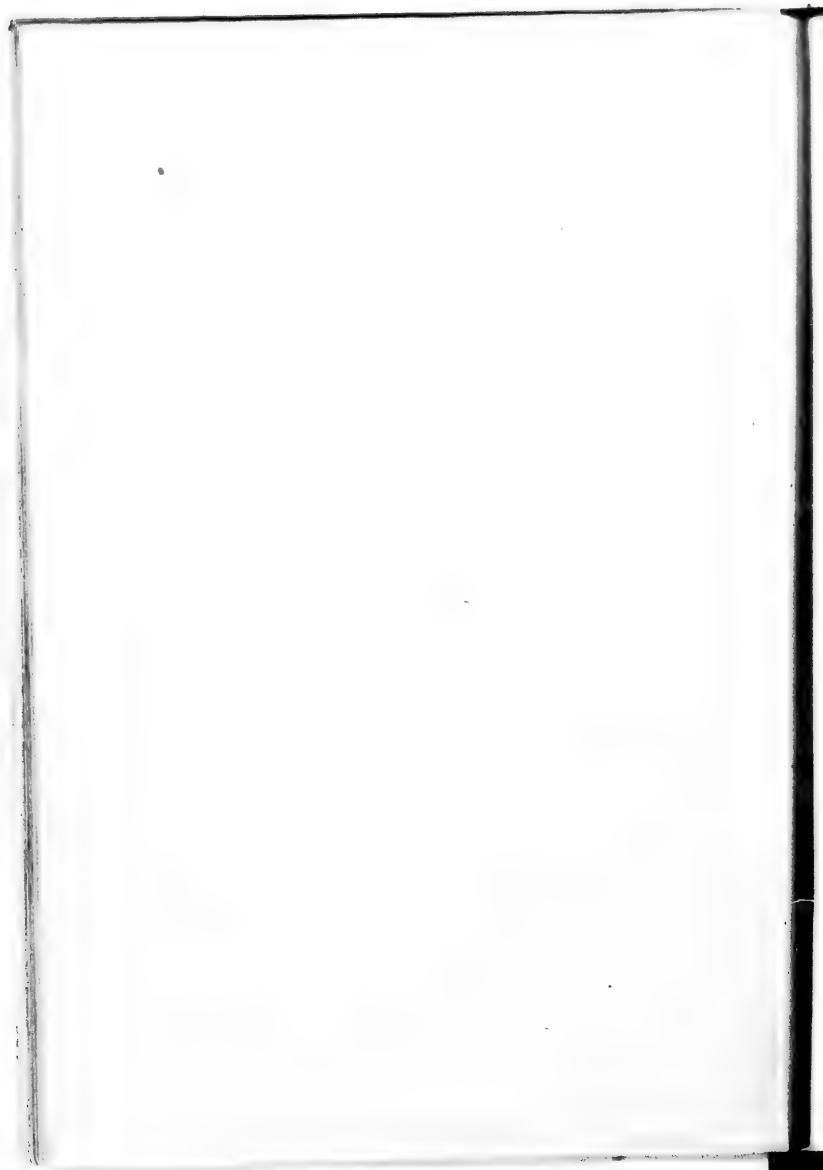
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LAUGHTER OF THE SPHINX.

THE Johann T. Bundergup expedition for the exploration of Greenland was a promising enterprise. Ostensibly its mission was to make detailed charts of the west coast from Cape York to Lockwood and Brainerd's furthest, to determine the northern limits of the great island, and to complete the unexplored line from Peary's Independence Bay southward upon the east coast to Cape Bismarck. The scientific corps attached to the expedition was to take thorough observations of the weather, the glacial and magnetic phenomena, the rocks, the sea and its depths, and the birds, animals, and plants of whatever region it should traverse. There was a clause in the published plans, however, providing for a "dash" from the northernmost land over the ice pack of the Arctic Ocean towards the Pole. It was a modest clause, apparently thrown in quite incidentally among

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the other objects of the expedition. The public was supposed to look askance at attempts upon the North Pole, because there is no money to be made there. But as the leader knew, and every volunteer knew, and most of the public knew, the clause was the heart of the plan.

The scheme of operations was drawn up according to the most recent theories of Arctic authority. The advance upon the Sphinx of the North was to be conducted according to strategic principles with ample provision for retreat. There were precautions against death from starvation. An enormous depot of supplies was to be established at Whale Sound, and renewed every summer by relief vessels from New York. From this main store a line of *caches*, thirty miles apart, was to be laid along the entire route of the expedition.

The completion of these plans was estimated to be the work of twenty-five men for upwards of six years. If twenty years should be necessary, that would make no difference. There was plenty of money to last for an indefinite time. The patron of the

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expedition, a retired brewer who had made an enormous fortune and had acquired a longing for fame, perceived that immortality lies in having one's name attached to some part of the earth's surface. To accomplish this, he had set aside two of his many millions. The interest of that sum was to support the Arctic expedition, on conditions that all newly discovered territory should somewhere bear his name and that the island nearest to the Pole should be called Bundergup Land.

"Unt mit dot," said the shrewd old German, "efery poy unt girl voreffer, vot goes to dot school unt deir geographie learnt, vill mispronounce my name unt vill hafe hatred for me. Aber, my name vill pe dere on de book unt meine Seele in Paradies vill know."

Eleven hundred and three men responded to a call for volunteers. The leader selected twenty-five for the first two years of service. The Arctic Sphinx employs various methods of warfare against her assailants. Not only does she attack them directly, with ice-floes that crush them, snow-storms that smother them, and the powers of cold that chill away

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their lives, but also she has a guerilla fashion of wearing upon their nerves with the dark. After his second consecutive winter in the far north a man loses enthusiasm, and when enthusiasm is gone, muscle and endurance are of little avail against the Sphinx. Therefore the leader had devised a system of relays. Each force of twenty-five was to be replaced after the second season with fresh men from home.

On the 21st of June the new Arctic ship Bundergup, sheathed outside with greenhart and fortified inside, after the manner of sealers, with scores of stanchions to resist ice-pressure, steamed north from her dock in Brooklyn. On the 30th of July the party landed their wonderful equipment upon a sunny beach in Greenland. Twelve days afterwards a house, firmly anchored against Arctic winds, stood perched upon a muddy foothill, half-way between the magnificent snow-crowned cliffs of red sandstone and the bay. About the house clustered several sealskin tents, and among the tents lounged human beings with dark complexions, ruddy cheeks, white teeth, and long black manes.

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They were clad in the skins of seals, ice-bears, and blue-foxes.

The ship sailed home, and the representative of the Associated Press, who returned with her, reported that the party had made friends with the Eskimos and had chosen a delightful spot for their winter home. "Around their house," he said, "a million poppies lift their little yellow-and-white heads to the never-setting sun. The botanists are crouching over rare Arctic plants. The ethnologists are scrambling after black-and-white spiders, yellow butterflies, and gorgeous bumble-bees. The hunters have killed walrus enough to feed the dogs for the whole winter, and by this time, doubtless, have supplied the party with haunches of reindeer, which remain ever fresh in that germless air. The morale of the party is excellent. It is safe to predict a brilliant success for the expedition."

His forecast might, perhaps, have been verified but for the carelessness of a waiter in a restaurant.

The waiter was not a member of the expedition. The party was chiefly made up of

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scientific men. Most of them were Germans or of German parentage, but the principal hunter was an American, a member of one of the oldest families in New York. He had been chosen at the request of Mrs. Bundergup, who desired to be received in society. He was a fine big fellow named Van Den Zee. The Associated Press representative described him as the "young aristocrat, who has killed elephants in Africa, tigers in India, and ladies in the ball-rooms of all nations."

He made no boast of his social position. The member of the party who proclaimed his high standing in the aristocracy was the doctor. As a class, surgeons of Arctic expeditions are the finest of men. Dr. Brank of the Bundergup expedition was an exception. He had been a protégé of the patron. Bundergup had chosen him out of a public school in Chicago, had sent him to college, where he learned to play a winning game of billiards, and to the schools and hospitals in Paris, where he learned to deride religion and to worship the footlights. He rated himself a man of the world, and spoke of his

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honor with respect. Bundergup, who never did things by halves, had forced him upon the leader, and, indeed, but for his restive tongue he would have been a passable explorer. He overtopped even Van Den Zee by an inch or two, and he had several medals (he brought them with him to impress his companions) won in college athletics.

He was the tallest of the party, but none of the men lacked two inches of six feet. None had passed through an Arctic winter, but most of them were experienced in outdoor life.

"A magnificent corps," said the leader to himself, as he glanced down the table at the first dinner. "We ought to carry everything before us."

There followed a series of cracking sounds, like the reports of a six-pounder rapid-fire rifle. The entomologist, who had written poetry, remarked afterwards that the Arctic Sphinx had laughed. But at the time the exclamation ran about the table:

"Hello, there goes another iceberg from the glacier!"

Whatever it was it raised a great wave,

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which darted up the beach and carried away the windmill. The windmill lay near the shore, waiting until the party should be ready to set it up. The wave rolled it down the slope, floated it deftly between a floe and a berg, and tilted the masses of ice together. After twelve hours of hard work, the explorers and the eight Eskimos in the village chopped a hole in the floe and fished up what was left of the sail. Considered as a grotesque effect in wrought iron, it was admirable; considered as a windmill, however, it was too curly. It had been designed extra heavy, to endure Arctic winds. The whole force of the party failed to make it look like anything but a gigantic spider playing 'possum.

"Very well, boys," said the leader to his red-faced party, "leave it alone. We can easily make another windmill. A wooden one will do just as well."

When the wooden windmill was established, and guyed against the northern tempests, a sudden squall came down from the cliffs at the south and whirled the structure over. In falling, the huge wheel broke loose.

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The wind rolled it down the hill, bounding like a broken hoop, caught it up at the beach, and lodged it upon a majestic iceberg that was floating down the bay. The iceberg grounded opposite the house. The windmill hung in a cleft between a tall pinnacle and the main mass of ice, and rattled a request for succor.

"I'll go and get it," volunteered the doctor.

"No, no!" commanded the leader, hastily.

"Never venture near an iceberg. They are dangerous. At any time they are likely to tip over and crush you. The slightest thing may disturb their equilibrium. Once a ship in which I was a passenger was passing near a big conical berg that looked as stable as a church. Some one had occasion to blow the big steam-whistle. At the sound the whole thing crumbled to pieces, and turned over. If it had thumped us on the keel it would have split us. We are in the midst of tremendous forces, gentlemen. It is necessary to be cautious."

He sauntered despondently into the house.

"He is an old fogey!" commented the doctor. "I'm going to have the windmill."

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"Better not try," remonstrated Van Den Zee. "That spire is tottering now. Wait until it falls. I wish we could get the sail though. We may need it."

The windmill was intended to furnish power for the electric plant. Without it the party would be forced to make shift with dim oil-lamps in the Arctic darkness. With the aid of an arc-light Nansen brought his party cheerfully through three winters. The leader had hoped for much comfort in his dynamo.

"However," he said, "other expeditions have done with oil."

Again the Sphinx chuckled, and another wave rolled up the beach and snatched at the oil-barrels, but they had been hauled out of its reach. It returned upon the ice-berg, shifted it around, and tilted it up on one side, so that the pinnacle hung out over the water apparently just ready to topple over. To see whether it had fallen was the first thought of the explorers when they turned out of their bunks in the morning—for by this time the sun was rising and setting regularly as it does in the temperate zones.

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But the ice held as steady as a leaning tower.

"Why doesn't the thing go!" exclaimed the doctor. "The sight of that windmill exasperates me. I'm going to fetch it down."

He fired twice with his rifle. A few chips flew from the base of the ice, but no crash followed.

"Very well," said the doctor. "I'm going to chop it down. Hello, there is a new berg."

A vast block of ice had taken the ground a hundred feet east of the first. Its sides were hewn square, but it had a pitched roof, red with basaltic mud.

"Looks like a church," remarked the doctor, who was brandishing an axe. "We had better call our headquarters Camp Cathedral. I'm going to desecrate one of these places of Arctic worship."

But the Sphinx had other plans. An Eskimo came running up the beach with news that evil spirits had entered into his wife, and a request for the *angekok* to come and charm them away.

It was a case of inflammatory rheumatism,

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and it developed into pneumonia. The doctor worked hard, and ultimately saved the woman, thereby winning loyal affection from Tung-Wee, her husband, and awe from the rest of the tribe. Inflammatory rheumatism is the bane of Eskimos.

To know the Eskimos and not be fascinated by them is not possible. To the doctor and to Van Den Zee the tribe was a god-send; it provided them with amusement. Through the season of storms, when the snow gathered higher on a level than a man's head, and far into the cloudless season of darkness and still cold, when noonday was a twilight so dim that print was illegible out of doors, and when for months the mercury thermometer might have served as a bullet, the Eskimos kept up the spirits of the two white men.

At headquarters the scientific staff was not doing as well. In order to occupy his men, the leader had imposed upon them sledge-making. At first they found carpentry entertaining, but none of them was used to the atmosphere of shavings, and long before Christmas the professors scowled upon the

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plane, while the leader drew up his eyebrows at their sledges. He tried to rouse an interest in games, but the men of science scorned cards. One set of chessmen turned up among the supplies. Over the board after the day's planing had been finished two of the party usually wrangled, while the others strained their eyes by the single lamp with often-read books or with their journals. It was only upon the arrival of the doctor and the hunter with lively tales of their Eskimo friends that cheerfulness entered the house.

The leader noticed this. One night after dinner he drew the two companions apart.

"Look here, you fellows," he said. "We're in a pretty bad way. The nerve of the men is going; they're getting quarrelsome. You two who seem to have kept your sand are holding the party together. When you're away we are dismal. I wish you would stay at home more, a good deal more. You will deserve credit for saving the expedition if you do."

"Certainly," answered Van Den Zee.

If the Sphinx chuckled, she did it quietly.

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It was her hour, however. The two explorers remained at home, told stories to their comrades, laughed as much as they could, and for a time lightened the atmosphere of the house. They issued out of doors only at the exercise hour. At the end of seven evenings their laughter rang flat and their stories gave out.

"Van Den Zee," said the doctor, "this altruism isn't what it's cracked up to be. We need a change. I'm all murky inside my head, and you're green in the face. Come out and chop ice; it's my turn to furnish drinking-water."

They harnessed the dogs and raced with the sledge out over the snow-covered floes to the bergs.

"There's that damned windmill yet," said the doctor. "I'm going to have a hack at that spire, if it falls and kills me."

He was in a perverse mood, and Van Den Zee was not in his normal good humor or he would have known better than to remonstrate.

"Don't be a fool!" he said.

The doctor flashed around at him.

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"A fool," he demanded. "What do you mean by calling me a fool?"

"Just what I say," responded the hunter coolly. "It's foolish to risk your life needlessly."

Brank's eyes gleamed in the dark, like a wolf's.

"Van Den Zee," he exclaimed, "I allow no man to call me a fool. If any one in this party but you had said it——"

"What would you have done?" asked the hunter.

"Don't put on airs with me," burst out the doctor. "I'm as good as you. I've lived in France, and I know how gentlemen settle their differences."

"If that's the case," replied Van Den Zee, "I had better run away. Good night."

He turned on his heel and strode to headquarters. Half an hour afterwards the doctor entered with a sledge heavily loaded with ice.

"The old church-spire will never come down," he proclaimed. "I've chopped away half its foundations. It's as stiff as dogma."

"Dr. Brank," exclaimed the leader, "this

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is direct disobedience of my orders. I desire that you will never again risk your life needlessly."

The doctor cast a quick glance at Van Den Zee, and his face turned red.

"Your orders are old maid's orders," he blurted out. "If your men and dogs can save a few hundred feet of hard travel by cutting ice from the nearest berg, you ought not to make a row. I'm going where my friends are better tempered."

Before the leader could reply he had left the house. He did not return at sleeping time, and one of the Eskimos brought word that he had taken up his quarters at Tung-Wee's. The leader asked Van Den Zee to fetch him back.

"I doubt if I am the best messenger," replied the hunter. "He is down on me, just now, and I don't feel particularly amiable towards him. Christmas is almost here. Can't you send one of the fellows to remind him of the dinner?"

It was the custom of the leader to observe holidays and birthdays with feasts, according to the time-honored Arctic precedent. The

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Christmas dinner was to be the great event of the year. It was set for Christmas eve, and next day there was to be a tree, with presents, sent by friends of the party to the leader before the expedition sailed, and brought among the supplies in a mysterious box. The leader hoped for much good from the Christmas jollity.

The doctor appeared at the feast in high spirits.

"Why don't you fellows turn in with the Eskimos?" he exclaimed. "It's the only way to live in a savage country—adopt the customs of the natives. I'm not sure that they have not solved the problems of morals that we are always bothering about at home. When an Eskimo is tired of his wife, for instance, he exchanges spouses with a friend. Now, why can't we do that at home? I know of half a dozen cases among the best families in New York where that plan would have relieved serious situations."

The doctor knew how to tell a story, funny or dramatic, and during the succeeding half hour even the scientific corps forgot the hardships of carpentry in laughing over bits

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of scandal. Van Den Zee, however, glowered from a corner, and his face turned crimson. At last he broke in with a harsh voice.

"Dr. Brank," he said, "the last three stories you have told concern friends of mine. I know the stories to be false. You read them in the newspapers."

"They are personal friends of mine, too," retorted the doctor. "The man in the last case gave a swell banquet for me, just before I came away—and by the same token, the waiter poured a bottle of Worcestershire sauce over my shirt front and made it a brown pulp."

"They don't have Worcestershire sauce at—at swell dinners," roared Van Den Zee. "They season their food outside."

"Do you mean that I lie?" challenged the doctor.

"Gentlemen!" exclaimed the leader. "Have you forgotten yourselves? Sit down, both of you. I'm sorry for this. I was going to propose a toast to our friends at home."

The doctor glowered for a moment. Then he sank into his seat with an indifferent air.

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"Beg your pardon, sir," he said. "Propose your toast."

There was plenty of wine, and every one drank a good deal. The spirits of the explorers rose; the scientific men told scientific anecdotes, which are extremely funny, with a flavor altogether their own. The quarrel appeared to be forgotten by every one except Van Den Zee, who sat silent.

At twelve o'clock the leader called for the last toast.

"Sweethearts and Wives," he said. Every one drank, broke his glass, and turned to his bunk.

In the midst of the confusion the leader seized Dr. Brank by the arm and led him to Van Den Zee's side.

"This has been a most successful evening," said the leader. "It needs only one thing more to be perfect. You two men must shake hands and be friends."

"Willingly," exclaimed the doctor. He seized Van Den Zee's reluctant hand and pressed it close.

"That's good," said the leader. "Now I'm satisfied that we shall pull through."

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He turned away. Brank retained the hunter's hand in a firm grip. The pupils of his eyes contracted.

"You cad," he whispered, "you told me I lied. Dare you to fight."

"I'll fight you," returned the hunter, "but not until after the expedition is over. Then——"

"Here, and to-night," interrupted the doctor. "Come out of doors after those drunken men have gone to sleep, and bring your revolver. I'll back up every story I told."

Van Den Zee's face flushed still redder. His fists clenched, and he drew back his hand as if for a blow. The doctor shrugged his shoulders disdainfully and left the house. In the confusion of bed-time his absence passed unnoticed. Van Den Zee crawled beneath his blankets without undressing. When everything except the heavy breathing of the party was quiet, he loaded his revolver and stole out of doors.

Two flaring lights shone from the beach. Approaching them, Van Den Zee found the doctor, Tung-Wee, and another Eskimo, with three torches of wood soaked in kerosene.

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"These are our seconds," said the doctor.
"Come along."

He led the way out over the ice-fields toward the two grounded bergs. Mechanically Van Den Zee followed.

The snow was soft and sticky about his feet, and for the first time the hunter noticed that the weather had changed. There was blowing one of those warm southwest winds, called föhns, which sometimes spring up in the Arctic winter. The sky was overcast with low drifting clouds, from which fell a few hot rain-drops. The floes out in Baffin's Bay, broken up by the warmth, were roaring with the mighty tide. Bits of ice, snapped off by the change of temperature, were jingling down the sides of the two bergs, whose white masses loomed ghostly in the heavy darkness.

At the first berg the doctor paused.

"We will fix torches, six feet high, into the sides of these bergs" he said. "We will stand directly in front of them, so that our forms will be clear enough to shoot at. You will go on to that berg, while I will set my torch here. Tung-Wee will hold the

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third torch half-way between us. When he drops it we will fire. I have explained it to him."

Van Den Zee glanced about at the dismal scene, drew a breath or two of the fresh air, and passed his hand across his forehead.

"Look here," he said, turning to the doctor. "I don't want to fight you now. Wait until we have done our work."

"*Lache*," exclaimed Brank, and struck the hunter in the face. Van Den Zee gazed at him for a moment, and without a word made his way to the second berg, dug a socket in it with his knife, and planted his torch.

When he turned, the doctor's head, which had put the torch in eclipse, was surrounded by a misty corona. Tung-Wee's red light flared murkily, in the middle ground, well out of line.

"Are you ready?" called the doctor.

"Yes."

"Tung-Wee! *Igni peterangitu!*" shouted the doctor.

The Eskimo smothered his flame in the snow. The report of the two forty-six calibre cartridges rang out. Van Den Zee

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dropped his pistol and clapped his hand to his right arm.

There followed a series of sharp snapping noises, a roar, and a crash that shook the whole frozen bay. The doctor's torch went out. The church-spire had fallen.

Lights appeared at the headquarters, and black figures with lanterns rushed out over the ice. The leader found Van Den Zee leaning against his berg. Blood dripped from his right arm. He could give no clear information.

"I fired in the air," he repeated once and again. "Heaven knows I didn't fire towards him!"

A man supported him to the house; the others hastened to fetch picks and shovels. They found Dr. Brank under the edge of the débris. By some miracle he had escaped death, but his usefulness to the expedition was ended. As they carried his shattered body towards the shore, the six-pounder at the glacier opened fire, and a wave tossed and cracked the solid ice-fields beneath them.

The leader shook an impotent fist towards the north.

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"Laugh, damn you !" he growled.

The nerves of his men, already shaken, gave way under the shock. When the relay party arrived, in July, they found twenty-five disaffected explorers, with boxes packed, waiting to go home.

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JARRING SECTS.

"OUR work has led us to an awful land, gentlemen, said the leader. "The climate of Greenland is heavenly in summer; in winter it is, if I may be permitted to employ a forcible simile, infernal. In committing his vilest criminals to a circle of ice, Dante exhibited a knowledge of physical conditions that was far in advance of his epoch. I will not assert that the Arctic winter makes Judases of men; that were, perhaps, too violent. But it is certain that the cold, the darkness, and the isolation from one's fellow-beings tend to bring out in the human creature some of the savage elements which are repressed by civilization."

He paused and glanced up and down the long dinner-table set in the Arctic headquarters.

"But with this party," he resumed, "I have nothing to fear. Each one of you has

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already achieved distinction in his own branch of science; yet each one of you knows that the greatest opportunity of his life lies immediately before him. You will labor strenuously, and in your work you will forget petty dissensions. And, if differences of opinion should arise—you are all men of the highest intelligence; you will know how to control yourselves. The members of Lieutenant Greely's party were chiefly common soldiers; yet, with one or two exceptions, they exhibited the noblest fortitude and good humor amid fearful perils. How much more fitted are we, men of enlightenment, to smile in the face of hardship!"

He sank into his chair amid a loud clapping of hands. The members of the Second Bundergup Expedition for the Exploration of Greenland made a show of veneration for their leader, first because he was the cousin of Johann T. Bundergup, by whose munificence the party had been equipped and sent out; second, because he had won world-wide renown as a meteorologist in the United States Signal Service. Except for the chief hunter and one other man, a writer of novels

Jarring Sects

sent by a New York newspaper to do the popular history of the expedition, every member of the party was an authority in some branch of science, and knew how to respect the distinction of others.

"Good speech, wasn't it?" asked the novelist as the geologists, botanists, entomologists, and meteorologists dispersed to their fields of work.

"Yes," assented the hunter. "It sounded as pretty as an oration upon the tariff question, and contained as much sense."

The novelist's eyebrows curved (as he might have said in a story) into interrogation points. The hunter laughed.

"Mr. Dahlgren," he said, "you are here to find copy—that's the technical word, isn't it? Well, you will find it."

"I have found enough already to make a book," replied the writer. "What splendid local color! These magnificent cliffs crowned with the purest snows, these misty days when the black sea, as flat as a floor, extends away into space like the distances of an opium dream; these stately icebergs with their caves, blue as the grotto of Capri,

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darting at you azure reflections which they have caught from the sunlit ripples; this midnight sun, which turns the foreground into goblin land, with grotesque shadows, and the distance into fairyland, with glorifying light—what nobler background could a man desire? And for characters, look at the natives, with their black tangles of hair, glowing eyes, dusky skins, and red cheeks; creatures of the past; men of both the stone age and the golden age; eaters of meat without salt; lovers of peace; worshippers of I know not what gods! The only wonder is that every one of us isn't metamorphosed into a poet."

The hunter's gray eyes gazed out through the door of the Arctic hut to the blue bay flecked with white dots of ice. It was a moment before his reply came.

"Yes," he assented musingly. "There is another background, just as picturesque. I saw it when I was here a year ago. I can't describe it as well as you will, but it is black and the wind blows and the ice creaks, and your nerves are all on edge. If you are an Eskimo, you are in awe of the devils; if you

Jarring Sects

are an American, you are in awe of the devils and the cold, too. Then—but you'll see for yourself. There are pleasant things as well as dismal ones. But if I am not mistaken grimness will be the tone of your stories. And in spite of our leader's speech, your grimmest stories will not be Eskimo stories."

"Van Den Zee," returned the novelist, "you're a pessimist. What harm can come to us? Haven't we a comfortable house, plenty to eat, and nothing to do? Aren't we, as the leader said, men of intelligence, with ideas to exchange that will keep us occupied in the darkness?"

"Precisely," returned the hunter. He finished his pipe, crossed the room to his bunk, took down his rifle, and returned to the door.

"Intelligent men," he said, "know more things to quarrel about than stupid ones. Come," he added, hastily, "I'm going north with the ship. Don't you want to go, too? She will run to Littleton Island after walrus. It's a four days' trip. You will have a chance to stand for an hour the farthest north of all human beings if that will give you a new

Laughter of the Sphinx

sensation—you are looking for sensations, aren't you?"

The novelist laughed.

"Thank you," he said. "I think I'll remain here and observe the aborigine in his native lair."

An hour afterwards, trudging down the beach towards the Eskimo *tupiks*, he waved a farewell to the ship as she laid her course out of the bay.

"Good-bye, dark-spirited man," he shouted; "bring me some walrus-hunting stories for the book."

Van Den Zee smiled a melancholy farewell.

"What a gloomy mind he has," murmured Dahlgren. "I feel rather like singing than like quarreling. The spell of the Arctic spirits is upon me. Fancy bothering with a row in the presence of these cliffs and snows! Even my Eskimo friends are out for a lark. I wonder what makes them rush about like that? It must be a dance."

A crowd of the skin-clad people was collected around one of the sealskin tents, and from all directions other Eskimos were has-

Jarring Facts

tening to join the throng. As Dahlgren drew near he perceived that none of the dusky faces wore the easily awakened Eskimo smile. As he approached, the group drew off, with glances of distrust, and permitted him to ascend a little grassy mound upon which stood the *tupik*.

From within came the nasal voice of Tallant, the ethnologist of the party.

"Now, sir, I think I have demonstrated beyond doubt that nature has provided the Eskimo with an under-coat of blubber, like that of a seal."

Dahlgren drew aside the tent-flap. Upon the wide stone sleeping-slab at the rear lay a naked Eskimo. His hands and feet were bound to the corners of the rock with thongs of seal-hide. His mouth was open, and his eyes turned helplessly from Tallant to the surgeon of the party, both of whom were bending over him.

"See how the muscles are hidden by the cushion of blubber. Yet he is a strong lad; it taxed my utmost power to strip him for inspection. Are you convinced?"

"Not altogether," replied the surgeon.

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"I see no signs of anything beyond an ordinary layer of fat such as an inhabitant of the tropics may have. Moreover, with deference to your acknowledged ability, I must maintain that the methods you have used are unnecessarily cruel, and I must beg you to release the man."

"No, sir," exclaimed the ethnologist. "Not until you acknowledge yourself to be in the wrong. I am surprised that you, a scientific man, should exhibit sentiment at a moment like this. I have my lancet here, and I propose to make an incision so that you may observe the quality of this layer of blubber."

At the sight of the lancet the Eskimo set up an eldritch screaming, and struggled until the slab beneath him rocked. The doctor slipped the thong from one corner of the stone, and with a turn or two the Eskimo freed himself. He sprang between the two white men and dashed down the hill towards his tribespeople, who, in turn, seized with a panic, scattered at his approach.

The two white men stood frowning at one another.

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"Sir," burst out the ethnologist, "you have thwarted my experiment!"

"Sir," retorted the doctor, "you are a fool!" With that he turned upon his heel and stalked up the beach towards the headquarters.

The ethnologist made two paces to follow, brought his head violently against the cross-bar of the tent-frame and paused. Dahlgren, still poised in amazement with the tent-flap in his hand, uttered an exclamation. The ethnologist looked up under the hand with which he was rubbing the bruise.

"Ah, Mr. Dahlgren," he said, "you have been a witness of this man's pusillanimity. He has challenged my authority in a matter about which he knew nothing, and has refused to submit the case to proof. When we have reached home if he dares to throw discredit upon my theory, I shall have your word as evidence that he shrank from the test."

Dahlgren drew a long breath.

"Oh, certainly," he said, "if the doctor disputes you."

Tallant cast an impatient glance at the novelist.

Laughter of the Sphinx

"Of course, he will dispute me," he averred. "Before we came here he had committed himself to his theory. He cannot abandon it; his authority among scientific men would be destroyed."

"Indeed," said Dahlgren, absently. He was glancing about the settlement. A few Eskimos still lingered in the distance, but the tents were deserted. Tallant noted the direction of his eyes.

"Ah," he said, "I see what you are thinking of. You would like to be convinced by demonstration. I admire your cautious spirit. But we must wait until to-morrow, my dear sir, when the slight sensation of this incident has worn itself out. Then we will catch another Eskimo, and I will show you that I am right."

When the party reassembled for dinner, that evening, there was a vacant chair. The leader eyed it severely through his spectacles. It was his theory that an Arctic expedition should be conducted according to a system, even as a weather bureau. He had posted upon the door of the headquarters a set of rules covering the routine duties of the

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day. One of the rules provided that every member not away upon a long excursion should keep meal times.

"The post-prandial smoke-hour," he pointed out, "is the period when men acquire knowledge of the best characteristics of their comrades. Talk and tobacco cement friendships. But the talk must be amiable, and how can it be amiable when the meal has been hurried and irregular, as it must be if the members of the party do not arrive on time? I am surprised that Prof. Morrell should disregard this rule."

"Perhaps he has made a find," suggested Dahlgren. "I saw him scouting along the edge of the glacier."

"Prof. Morrell vill make no find," put in Prof. Delacour, the representative of the French government. "I myself have scoured ze vicinity of zat glacier. Prof. Morrell may examine wis a microscope every foot of ze ground; he will discover no plant. I've zem all in my press."

"Here comes Prof. Morrell," announced the novelist. "He is running."

The botanist burst into the hut.

Laughter of the Sphinx

"See, gentlemen," he exclaimed. "See what I have found! Edelweiss!"

The Frenchman's lip curled up, but his cheeks lost some of their ruddy color.

"Edelweiss!" he exclaimed. It cannot be. There is no edelweiss in Greenland!"

"See it for yourself," retorted Morrell. I found it upon the crest of a hill, beside the glacier. I had looked in vain along the valley; nothing interesting was to be seen, when suddenly far above me the little white spot caught my eye. I scrambled up a perpendicular cliff. How I did it I cannot tell. But my peril was magnificently rewarded."

"Meanwhile, Prof. Morrell," broke in the serene voice of the leader, "you have kept our dinner waiting. I rejoice in your discovery and so will our patron, Mr. Bundergup. I suggest that you name this variety of the flower after him. But I repeat that you have delayed our meal. Come, let us sit down."

The botanist looked perplexed.

"Very well, sir," he stammered. "I should like to put the plant in my press first."

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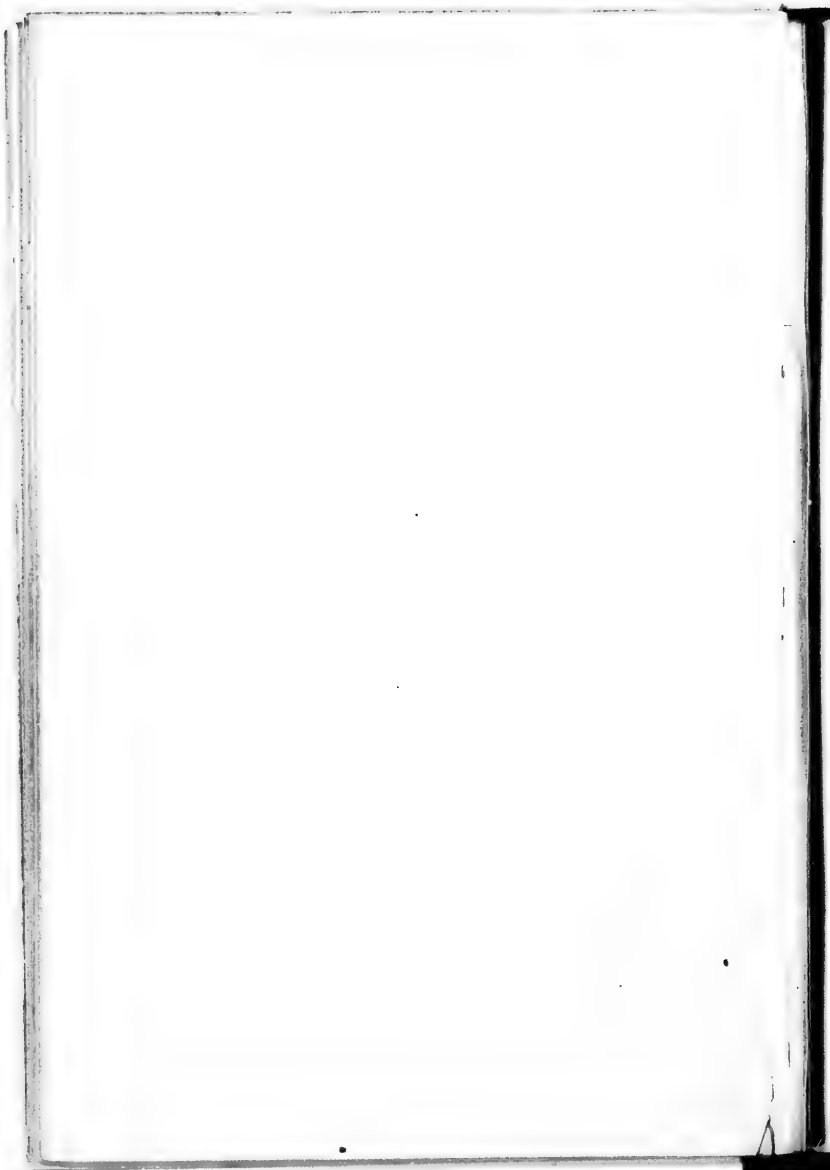
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"I would rather have you sit down at once," replied the leader.

The post-prandial smoke-hour was not cheerful that day. The big Frenchman blew rings and glowered at them; the botanist kept his eyes upon his plate. The ethnologist cast triumphant glances at the doctor, who was talking cheerfully enough with the leader. The public conversation consisted of a dispute between the two geologists, one of whom asserted that the strata-formation in glaciers was caused by precipitation during various years, in the névé basin; while the other declared that it was due to conflicting pressures. The argument waxed warm; the faces of the geologists turned as red as the sandstone cliff behind the headquarters. Finally, the leader closed the smoke-hour ten minutes before the wonted time had elapsed.

Dahlgren was early afoot next day. When he sauntered out of the headquarters the forenoon breeze had not yet begun to blow. The bay shone as glossy and black as the glass-covered ponds in topographical models. Through the haze that hung over the sea

Laughter of the Sphinx

loomed the dim masses of enormous bergs. The sun was a crimson disc. The tide was at rest. Nothing stirred.

"Now this sort of thing ought to be absolute peacefulness," commented Dahlgren aloud; "but it is not. On the contrary, there is unrest in such a stupendous silence. I feel as if the universe were in suspense; as if the Arctic spirit were holding its breath for something to happen."

"Something is going to happen," responded a voice behind him. Turning, the novelist perceived little Dr. Morrell. With trembling fingers the doctor thrust a folded paper into the novelist's hand.

"Read that!" he commanded.

Dahlgren unfolded the paper.

"To Gustav Schwarz, leader of the Second Bundergup Expedition to Greenland: Sir:" it began. "I have understood with surprise that the variety of edelweiss discovered in Greenland is to be named after Johann T. Bundergup, a man unknown to science. I beg to call your attention to the fact that in sending a representative upon this expedition France has conferred as great an honor

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as the patron himself. I should have been of the opinion that the Greenland edelweiss would have been christened either after my country or after me, her delegate. May I call the claims of France to your early attention?

"Meanwhile, sir, I beg you to receive the assurances of my distinguished consideration.

"DELACOUR."

As Dahlgren finished this note, his lips twitched. But when he glanced over it at the set teeth of the little botanist, he controlled his laughter.

"This is a remarkable note," he observed.

"Yes, sir," replied Morrell. "I found it upon the floor. Now, sir, I beg you to take note that the edelweiss was my discovery, and by every custom known to science should bear my name!"

"I have no doubt of it," agreed Dahlgren. "But what can I do in the matter?"

"Do, sir? You are the historian of this expedition. I adjure you to witness that these two men, the leader and the Frenchman, are in league against me. If you do not make that plain in your book, I shall call

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you to account in the newspapers. Stay, sir, and listen," he added, as Dahlgren made a movement to leave him. "That is not all. They have stolen my edelweiss. It was a concerted plot. You heard the leader order me not to press the plant. Well, sir, after dinner, when I sought it, I could not find it. The matter is plain. The Frenchman purloined my flower, with the knowledge and connivance of the leader.

Dahlgren's lips twitched again.

"Isn't stealing specimens held to be rather a matter of legitimate war fare?" he asked.

The professor cleared his throat.

"Well, possibly—at home," he acknowledged. "But here where a man's undying fame depends upon his ability to produce the specimen, the theft is sin, sir; nothing less than sin!"

"But there is more edelweiss. If you don't care to climb for it again, send an Eskimo,"

"True, Mr. Dahlgren, true," exclaimed the nervous little man. "You and I will beat them yet. I will get an Eskimo at once."

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He sped away towards the *tupiks*. Dahlgren, gazing after him, suddenly ceased to smile. Instead, he started, and sent his voice out in a shout.

"Professor! Professor! Hold on! The Eskimos have gone."

The hill where the little tents had lifted their dark peaks was as bare as the cliffs. Nothing but fragments of ice lay upon the beach where the *kayaks* had been. Dahlgren ran forward towards the camp-site, and half-a-dozen of the party, aroused by his cry, followed. The spots where the tents had stood were clearly marked. The sleeping-slabs remained, and immediately about them the ground was defiled with seal-oil, blood, entrails, and all the foulness of an Eskimo habitation. The great stones that had weighted the skirts of the tents against the wind rested in their circles. A coil or two of *agluna* and a few tiny ivory toys carved to represent seals or men or sledges lay about. But no Eskimo was in sight.

"*Was für ein Unglück ist hier passiert!*" gasped the leader, who was apt to forget his acquired tongue in moments of stress. "Ve

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cannot mitout de Eskimos succeed. It is ruin."

The explorers, collected about him, gazed at each other, but no intelligence appeared in any face.

"You see, Mr. Tallant," exclaimed the doctor, "you frightened them away with your confounded experiments."

Tallant shifted his lathy figure from one foot to the other, as a naughty boy shifts before his teacher.

"I had not supposed," he said, "that they would misunderstand me. I have measured Indians, from whom these people are undoubtedly descended, and found them reasonable."

"I should question if zey aire descended from 'ndians," interrupted Delacour. "Dat, I know, is ze t'eory American, but it seems to me more probable that they came from Asia, by ze way of Alaska. Look at ze high cheek-bones and ze oblique eyes! Mongolian, I assure you of it."

An outburst of protests broke off his speech. "I venture to disagree with——"
"Dr. Brinton says——" "But the tradition of the tribe ——."

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The voice of Morrell came out of the chorus, as in an opera the sustained note of the tenor emerges from the ensemble, "— moreover, you aspire to omniscience, sir, and you descend to the meanest methods to achieve distinction. What have you done with my edelweiss?"

"Gentlemen, gentlemen," exclaimed the leader. "You are forgetting yourselves. I command you to be silent."

The tumult died away.

"I am amazed, gentlemen," continued the leader. "What would they say at home, if they could see this distressing spectacle! To your work, sirs. Prof. Morrell, the specimen of Bundergup's edelweiss"—he cast a stern glance at the representative of the French government—"is in my keeping. You shall have it at once."

"Meanwhile," interposed Dahlgren, who had been scanning the stretch of beach that lay between the headquarters and the cape at the mouth of the bay. "If I may venture to make a suggestion, the Eskimos can't be far away yet. If we need them, why don't we bribe them to come back?"

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"That is a very good plan," agreed Tallant. "I was about to propose it myself. I shall start at once, and if you care to accompany me, Mr. Dahlgren, I shall be delighted to take you."

"Wait one moment, Prof. Tallant," interposed the leader. "I understand that you are responsible for the panic of the savages. It is not my purpose to send you as envoy. I shall select ——"

"Sir," interrupted the ethnologist, "in my official capacity I am the proper person to have dealings with this people. Who else knows their language? I demand the leadership of the party of placation."

"I shall select," began the leader again.

"I give you notice, sir, that, whether you select me or not, I shall deem myself a member of the party. In my official capacity ——"

"Do I understand, sir, that this means disobedience of my orders?"

"May I point out, sir, that your orders are in direct contradiction to the expectations of the scientific world? I shall take my departure at once before your orders are given,

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and thus relieve myself of the onus of disobedience."

He shouldered his gun and made off rapidly towards the cape.

"Let him go," sneered Delacour, "ze Eskimos will eat him, and we s'all 'ave one less insane among us."

Two days afterward the ship returned from the walrus hunt. Van Den Zee came off in a boat, and Dahlgren met him upon the beach.

"What luck?" asked the novelist.

"First rate," replied the hunter. "Nothing to mar the pleasure, except a slight disagreement between the taxidermist and the professor of natural history over the question whether all the walrus-skins and heads were to be turned in to the Natural History Society, or whether some might be kept for sale to private museums. How is it with you here?"

Dahlgren laughed.

"Van Den Zee," he explained; "it's really not a time for mirth, but I can't keep my face straight. This is the situation: There are ten men in that house, and no two are

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on speaking terms. Last night Delacour and Morrell came to blows. Delacour had been treating Morrell brutally, but he is the French government, and the little professor seems to be the butt of the party. So Dr. Schwarz must needs order Morrell to be put in irons."

Van Den Zee's eyes twinkled.

"Poor little professor," he said; "did he resist?"

"Well, the order caused a great deal of murmuring, and no one would carry it out. After that—well, I can't tell you about the confusion. No one paid any attention to Schwarz's orders, and every one was at odds. In the midst of the wrangle Schwarz climbed upon the table. The thing was so unlike him that every one stopped disputing to hear what he would say. 'Gentlemen,' he declared—you know he has an accent when he is much excited—'Gentlemen, I haf enough of dees disagreements. Listen! De Segond Bundergup Egspedition does not exist. It is dispandit.'

"That brought a storm about his head. Delacour said that if Schwarz was going to

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abandon the enterprise, he himself would lead it for the honor of France. Morrell sprang at him like a little cat. The rest choked Morrell off, but every one clamored to be leader, except Schwarz and the doctor. The doctor took his sleeping-bag and left the hut. The others fought till bed-time over ballots taken in a hat. I turned in before the contest was finished; I don't know who was chosen."

"Is this the doctor?" asked Van Den Zee.

Dahlgren turned about.

"No, it's Tallant. How oddly he is running!"

The ethnologist was hastening up the beach at the top of his speed, waving his hands and shouting, but picking up his feet in a curious, gingerly fashion.

"He is barefooted," commented the hunter.

Not only were his feet bare, but also they were cut and torn, and his breath came short.

"The ship!" he gasped as he came near.

"Not gone? Stop her! I want to go."

"Not gone yet. You're safe," responded Van Den Zee. "Sit down here in the boat

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and wash your feet in the salt water. I've got some whiskey somewhere."

The ethnologist slumped into the stern of the whale-boat with his legs dangling overboard. Van Den Zee supported his shoulders and poured out a huge cup of whiskey. Dahlgren bathed his feet with a bunch of seaweed.

"Work for the doctor here," he commented. "You must have been running for miles."

"Miles!" gasped the ethnologist. "I should think I had."

"Gentlemen," he continued, "row me to the ship. My usefulness among this people is ended. I am going home."

"Didn't you find the Eskimos?" inquired Dahlgren.

"Yes, sir, I found them, but they are entirely intractable. I will tell you. When I left you I proceeded around the point—a day's march as you know. No person was visible, but I found the marks of tent-poles that had been dragged in the sand, and I knew I was on the right track. So I ate some provisions and slept. Now, gentlemen, beyond

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that point an enormous glacier must have descended into the sea. It must have borne a score at least of lateral and medial moraines, and it melted away and deposited all those sharp-edged stones in lines stretching into the water. I had to climb over I don't know how many.

"But once beyond them, there I saw the Eskimos, upon a mound at the other side of a little sandy inlet. They ran about in the greatest confusion when they perceived me, and two or three men advanced almost to the water's edge.

"*Chimo!* I said. They consulted for a moment and then one called back, '*Chimo,*' and added something else, pointing to the inlet. The tide had gone out and left the sand almost dry. I thought I heard the Eskimo word for 'come,' so I hastened out upon a spur of rock and leaped to the sand.

"To my horror, I sank at once above my knees, and the whole surface of the inlet began to quiver like a custard. The sand closed in about my legs. I felt as if some sea-monster was sucking me down into its belly. It was a quicksand.

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"Two circumstances saved me. I had thrown myself from the rocks sidewise, and I was wearing rubber hip-boots. If my back had been presented to the rocks, I never should have escaped. As it was, with my right hand, I could reach a corner that hung out above me. I pulled and struggled, but the sand kept sucking me down until suddenly I wrenched my feet out of my boots; fortunately they were a size too large for me, to allow for extra stockings in winter. Then I could use both hands, and I hauled myself upon the rock by main strength. My boots sank out of sight.

"As I stood watching them a pack of the Eskimos came running toward me; they had circumvented the quicksand by some way of their own. That immense fellow, Ikwah, was in the lead, and he flourished one of those dog-whips with a lash thirty feet long. This peril was as bad as the quicksand. I have no shame in confessing that I turned and ran."

"They wouldn't have harmed you," broke in Van Den Zee. "Ikwah wouldn't hurt a mosquito. They came to help you out."

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"Sir," replied the ethnologist, who had recovered somewhat of his ordinary authoritative manner, "it is my profession to comprehend savage races, and I assure you that the manner of these men was distinctly menacing. Pray let me finish my narrative. I am a fast runner, and I made good my escape. I am good in an emergency; I am aware that trifles must not be considered. I took no thought for my feet; they must have been cut in crossing the moraines. If I had not had the presence of mind to run, I might have been harpooned, and my fate would have been a blot upon the fame of the expedition. Dr. Schwarz ought to have detailed at least one man to accompany me."

He sank back in his seat, nodded significantly at each of his companions in turn, and fell to examining his torn feet.

"Dahlgren," said Van Den Zee, "will you come to the house with me? I have some arrangements to make."

Dahlgren followed the hunter up the hill. His mouth was pursed up and his forehead was wrinkled.

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"Look here," he broke out, presently, "are all scientific men like this?"

"No," laughed Van Den Zee, "as a class they are the best fellows in the world. These men are mostly heads of institutions, used to being worshipped like little tin gods, and they don't understand restraint. Oh! of course, at home they scrap politely among themselves, but there it doesn't matter."

"Hark," interrupted the novelist.

The sound of voices raised in anger came from the headquarters. The two explorers hastened to fling open the door. About the table, set with a confusion of unwashed breakfast dishes, were grouped the members of the party. Every man's face was red and every man, shouting at the top of his voice, was bending forward and brandishing his fists toward the head of the table, where Delacour, waving a felt hat, was apparently trying to make a speech. Upon the edge of his bunk, with his forehead resting in his hands, sat Schwarz.

Van Den Zee raised significant eyebrows at Dahlgren, shrugged his shoulders, made his way to the leader's side and whispered

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in his ear. Schwarz listened for a moment, nodded eagerly, and seized the hunter by the hand.

The noise of rattling crockery broke in upon the tumult. Delacour was belaboring the table with his fist. A plate fell to the floor, and sudden silence followed the crash.

"Will you listen to me a moment?" put in Van Den Zee. At the sound of his cool voice the wranglers turned toward him.

The hunter advanced, smiling, to Delacour's side.

"I'm sorry to interrupt this discussion," he said, "but Dr. Schwarz, your leader, has asked me to say that the ship will start for home to-morrow. By his orders, all members of the party will be ready at five o'clock in the evening to go with her. If——"

"Nonsense, sir," burst in Delacour. "Dr. Schwarz 'as r-r-resign. Gentlemen, examine ze ballot; you yourselves will see."

"One moment, please," resumed Van Den Zee, laying a hand upon the Frenchman's shoulder. "Dr. Schwarz adds that to-morrow six sailors from the ship will be here to carry on board any—ah—bundles that are in

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the least difficult to move, and that if six are not enough, there are ten others, powerful and well-disciplined, besides himself, Mr. Dahlgren, myself, and I think the doctor."

"Certainly," spoke up the surgeon. "I for one shall be delighted to go home."

"I also am ready," piped up Prof. Morrell.

Van Den Zee faced the Frenchman and spoke in his most courteous tones.

"You, too, are ready, monsieur?" he inquired.

Delacour glanced about the circle of explorers. Apparently he found no encouragement in what he saw, for he shrugged his shoulders.

"*Mon Dieu*, since it is ordered," he said.

A month afterward Dahlgren and Van Den Zee sat beside a table laid for breakfast in the restaurant of the University Club. Dahlgren was rustling the pages of a newspaper. The coffee was already cool.

"Here it is!" he exclaimed.

"Do you mind reading it? I confess I am impatient."

"Certainly I'll read it. It's headed, 'Geo-

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graphical Club Dines. A brilliant gathering of eminent minds at the monthly feast. Prof. Schwarz's statement. The Arctic leader describes his expedition as a remarkable scientific success. A new flower discovered. Studies of the Eskimos.' It begins with a description of the dons present. Ah, here is Schwarz. 'The guest of the evening was Prof. Gustav Schwarz, leader of the Second Bundergup Expedition, just returned from Greenland. In response to the toast, "Our Arctic Heroes," the professor said: "Gentlemen, the applause with which you have greeted this toast is a flattering indication that the spirit of approval for Arctic enterprises lives despite the attacks of the multitude. I am delighted to have been the leader of an expedition that has made some addition to the general stock of information about the most fascinating of all countries, Greenland. It is not for me, however, to claim the chief honors of research. I owe a debt of gratitude to my brave and faithful assistants in the cause of science. I cannot too highly eulogize the energy and fortitude displayed by every member of my party. But

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particularly, gentlemen, my tribute is due to Prof. Delacour, the representative of the French government, to Prof. Morrell, who imperilled his life to gather that crowning glory of the expedition, the Bundergup edelweiss, and to Dr. Tallant, the heroic ethnologist, whose study of the fascinating but erratic aborigines has been indefatigable. I can only regret that the unpropitiousness of the season, which made our return seem imperative, deprived these gentlemen of the opportunity of pursuing their magnificent efforts throughout the winter.'''

Dahlgren's words had issued more and more slowly and emphatically as he read on, and here he paused, lowered his paper, and stared over it at Van Den Zee. The hunter raised his brows.

"My dear fellow," he said, "the public never gets the inside history of an Arctic expedition."

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DANIEL WEBSTER cut from the seal a morsel of meat eight inches long by two inches square. He crowded out of sight as much of the delicacy as his mouth and part of his œsophagus would hold—about six inches—and sliced off the visible two inches with a blow of his knife.

"I never knew before," commented Praed, "why the Eskimo nose was so snubby. I now see it all. It is a beautiful example of the law of survival. If you touch an Eskimo anywhere, you draw blood. The long-nosed men of the stone age slashed their skins at meal-times and died of hemorrhage. Only the short-nosed men could live. Even Daniel carves perilously close to his lovely snub,—and if Daniel's nose were a little shorter it would be a cavity."

"Just so," I replied, indifferently. Praed's

Laughter of the Sphinx

jaunty talk jarred upon me, and his superior tone toward the Eskimos displeased me. He was attached to the Relief Party as botanist. I believe he was a professor of natural history in some Western college. He had climbed a mountain in the Canadian Rockies, a minor peak, no difficult ascent. But the mountain was a virgin peak and bore a living glacier, and Praed wrote for the papers about it and made a great achievement of his exploit. Upon the strength of his reputation he assumed to direct the policy of the Relief Expedition, and when the leader refused to fall in with his views, Praed grumbled and once or twice approached open insubordination. The leader, a quiet, modest fellow, took his unruly botanist calmly, but several members of the party told me the man worried him.

However, when it suited his purpose, Praed could be humble enough. He discovered my irritation at once and took his own method of soothing it.

"Oh, come now, old fellow," he said, "don't take your Eskimos too seriously. I admire them as much as you do. Here,

The Education of Praed

Daniel,—Dahlgren, how do you say 'I like you,' in Husky-tongue?"

"*Iblee peeyook amishwa*," answered I, in the pidjin-Eskimo we had learned to use during our year in the far north.

"*Iblee kumook amista*," repeated Praed. Daniel received the communication with that heavy gravity which had won him his nickname; his birth-name was Meeoo. Praed shrugged his shoulders.

"I never shall learn the lingo," he sighed. "Tell him I am going to give him this knife."

"*Praed pilletay iblee savik*," I translated.

Daniel received the knife without comment. I caught a flash of pleasure in his eye, but it escaped Praed.

"He doesn't seem very grateful," he said. "I despair of the aborigine. He has no sense of humor, no gratitude, apparently no more affection than his dogs. He is pure selfishness. He is homely, he is fearfully unclean——"

"Professor Praed," I interrupted, "you arrived in Greenland three days ago. After you have knocked about with these fellows

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for a month you will change your opinion. As for dirt, eight or nine months in every year that bay is skimmed over with a little matter of five or six feet of ice. Until your party came, there was not a hatchet in the tribe to cut baths. In winter all these small streams that you see disappear. The Husky has to melt ice for drinking water, and that is no light affair for him. In summer, it's true, he might bathe; perhaps you would like to try it."

"Those are all very well as excuses," responded Praed, "but they don't remove facts. Your dear friends are disgustingly soiled. And I am going to accept your invitation to take a bath."

He did accept it. He said he was accustomed to cold water every morning (implying in his tone that he feared I wasn't), that he had been baptized in the Susquehanna River through a hole in the ice, and that he guessed he could stand a summer sea in Greenland. He took off his clothes, swam out to a berg grounded some forty feet off the beach, climbed hurriedly upon the ice, danced up and down and shouted until we put off in a

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The Education of Praed

boat and rescued him. For three days afterward he shivered under blankets and drank up the little store of whiskey that remained in our supplies.

I was not sorry that this object lesson had occurred. Our expedition had lived for nineteen months among the Eskimos. Two or three of us, whose chief duty was hunting, had learned to know the Innuits as one knows brothers. In a savage land, you choose your friends not because they can judge a picture or say witty things about their neighbors, but because they will go through any emergency by your side. More than once Daniel or one or another of our Eskimo comrades had saved us from death; more than once we had interposed between a Husky and the Kokoia. It was not pleasant to hear the cock-a-whoop members of the Relief Party, with their amateur knowledge of Arctic conditions, classifying our comrades among the Greenland fauna.

But the Relief Party got on well with the Eskimos. They had a cargo of knives, hatchets, saws, needles, scissors, wooden staves, and all things that represent wealth

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to the Innuits. These things they distributed freely among the settlements; it was but natural that they should win the hearts of the Husky-folk. Praed reappeared after his chill with a triumphant air, bearing bead necklaces and mirrors—for trading, he said. The Eskimos, however, shook their heads at these gewgaws, and Praed had to fall back upon useful articles. He obtained for himself the office of chief distributor, and waxed popular in the tribe.

One day, a fortnight or so after the episode of the bath, Daniel's wife, Megipsu, came running up the beach.

"The man with gifts is at my *tupik*. He desires something. I do not understand him. Will you come?"

I found Praed holding out the skirt of his coat toward Megipsu's little daughter.

"Like this," he was repeating. "Make me a coat. Scion of a savage race, if I had you at home, I should chastise you. You are stupid."

The child stared blankly at him.

"What is it, Professor Praed?" I asked.

He blushed and hesitated.

The Education of Praed

"Well, you see," he said, "Your Greenland climate is not what I expected. When the wind is quiet, everything is warm. When the gale comes up in the afternoon, it is cold. Now the—the fur clothes; their odor is as the odor of abattoirs. At first I didn't comprehend the evident joy you have in them. But on the whole you seem so comfortable in all weathers that I thought I would try a suit myself. You see, I don't like to be lumbered with a leather jacket all the time."

"Hm!" reflected I. "Praed is learning his Greenland." All I suggested, however, was that if he minded the smell he might carry his leather coat out with him and leave it upon a rock until he should need it.

"And have it stolen," he said, with a glance of pity.

I perceived that he had a great deal of Greenland yet to learn. Eskimos do not steal. I arranged with Megipsu for a seal-skin suit, however, to cost two pairs of scissors, a packet of sail-needles, a hunting-knife, a cracker-box and Praed's wooden signal-whistle, which Megipsu fancied. In a week the professor appeared in the silvery clothes.

Laughter of the Sphinx

He was highly enthusiastic. I listened patiently while he explained the garments.

"You see, when it is warm," he said, "I can loosen the draw-string and throw back the hood, and a draught comes in from the bottom and goes out at the neck and carries off the perspiration. When the wind rises, snap! I haul in the draw-string, cover my head, and I am hermetically sealed. Not an air can touch me."

"Precisely," I agreed. I had been wearing Eskimo clothes for about a year and two months. "I understand," I added, "that you are going *oogsook* hunting with Meeoo."

"Yes," he laughed. "I'm going to show the untutored savage the superiority of the rifle over the harpoon."

He learned more about Greenland on that expedition. There was a floe, perhaps a mile wide, anchored near the mouth of the bay by half a dozen grounded bergs. To this floe the Eskimo and the white man set forth in *kayaks*. It was midnight when they left and we were asleep, but the Huskies at the village told us that the professor couldn't

The Education of Praed

manage his canoe and finally had to permit Daniel to tow him.

Next night they returned with a seal. The professor had many words of praise for a country where the sun never sets and there is no loss of working-time, but nothing to say about the hunting. At last he confessed that Daniel had killed the seal.

"The *phoca barbata* is a wary animal," he protested. "He will not permit a white face to approach. Two or three of the creatures were taking sun baths upon the floe, but before I could creep within shooting distance they flopped into the water—a most ungraceful gait. All Arctic animals seem to be clumsy. I fired at one seal and I think I hit him, but he too dived.

"At last I resigned the rifle to Daniel. The savage squirmed over the ice like a worm. When the seals lifted their heads, Daniel lifted his. It is not surprising that he deceived them. His black muzzle looks precisely like that of a seal, and he wears a seal's fur. But his methods would never do in civilization. It took him half a day to crawl across that ice-floe."

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"But he shot the seal," someone put in.

"No," replied the professor. "That's just the point. He wormed himself along until he could almost reach the creature, and then sprang upon it and clubbed it to death with the butt."

I do not think Praed fully appreciated the marvellous adroitness of the hunter, nor the thoughtfulness of the man in saving a cartridge. He never seemed to comprehend that a charge of powder and bullet is worth more to an Eskimo than a diamond is worth to a bride at home. However, after that he began to treat the Huskies somewhat as if they were human beings.

His complete enlightenment as to the Eskimo character came all in a blaze at the end of our stay in Greenland. Our work there was done. Our explorations had been successful, our scientific collections were almost completed. There were only a few loose ends to be gathered up. The professor had seen some desirable flowers in a valley across the glacier. Near that same glacier, in the preceding summer, I, who was acting as mineralogist of the main party, had piled

The Education of Praed

a few specimens in a cranny to be carried to camp later, and I thought I might as well have them. We started forth together. Daniel and one or two other Huskies went with us for comradeship.

At the edge of the glacier we halted. It was a stupendous thing, crawling through a gap in the hills down into the sea like a section of the Midgard serpent. Half way up the flank, I remember, there was a round hole, and out of it spouted a waterfall, red with basaltic mud. One of the Æsir might have made such a wound with his spear. The back of the monster was rugged with crevasses.

"You can't cross here," I counselled. "You'd better try further up, where it's smoother. I'll climb the cliff and take an observation, while you wait here and eat your luncheon. It doesn't do to hurry too much in Greenland."

I was almost an hour making my way up the crags to a point where I could take a bird's-eye-view of the mass of ice. It was not a wide glacier,—the cliffs opposite were not more than four miles away; but the

Laughter of the Sphinx

great number of icebergs it threw off bore witness to the rapidity of its motion.

Suddenly, almost below me, upon the blue-white ice, appeared four or five black figures. They emerged out of a cleft near the edge and marched steadily toward the centre of glacier. The surface beyond them and upon either hand was criss-crossed with bright blue crevasses. Glints from the shining icicles, hanging down their sides, darted up to me as I stood a mile away. It was very picturesque, but I had no heart for enjoyment.

"The man is crazy!" I burst out and scrambled down the rough stones to overtake him.

In a quarter of an hour I had reached the bottom of the gorge between the glacier and the mountain, had crossed on a few pinnacles of rock the furious torrent which roared along the side of the ice, and had entered a huge blue cleft, with a gradually rising floor, which furnished easy ascent to the surface.

As soon as my head was clear of the cleft I saw one of the Eskimos running toward me. I hastened to meet him.

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"Pra' has fallen," cried the man. "The ice has eaten him. He has gone to sleep forever."

"Damnation!" I shouted. "Run to the ship. Tell all the white men to come and bring a rope!"

He sped into the cleft and I moved on. Surmounting a mound in the ice, I could scan the whole surface. A quarter of a mile beyond me the dark figures of the party crouched beside a long, narrow crevasse. As I drew near, the tall figure of the professor rose and faced me. He made no move to meet me, and when I had approached within a few feet of him I saw that his hands hung limp at his sides and that he was sobbing. He could not speak, but he pointed to the crevasse. I threw myself upon my face and peered over the brink.

A hundred feet below me, on the edge of a block of ice that hung unsteadily upon a mass of debris, lay Daniel. His head was doubled unnaturally forward upon his chest. The ice above him was stained with red. He must have died in an instant.

I sprang to my feet and faced the professor.

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"How did that happen?" I exclaimed. "Good God, man, speak! Don't act like a baby!"

Praed burst out sobbing afresh. It was a moment before he could control his tongue. When he spoke he clinched his hands and gazed blankly up the glacier toward the sun.

"It was I," he said. "He saved me. I fell——"

"Well?" I demanded.

"Do you see that shoulder of ice on this side of the crevasse, and the shelf jutting out opposite?"

I peered over the edge once more. The ice hung slightly out at the top, and I had a good view of everything beneath. The cleft was not more than five feet wide, but, except for the debris lodged below me, it sank away into darkness. It may have been a thousand feet deep.

Some twenty feet down the side a ledge, perhaps twelve inches wide, started from the wall. Upon the opposite wall, about six feet higher, as far as I could estimate, allowing for the foreshortening, there was another shelf considerably broader. Upon it sprang up the

The Education of Praed

stumps of two or three heavy icicles that had grown down from an ice bridge. Doubtless the debris caught below had been part of this bridge, which in its fall had carried the upper ends of the icicles with it. One end of the shelf slanted up almost to the surface of the glacier.

I took this in at a glance.

"Yes," I said, "go on."

"I must confess from the beginning," he proceeded, in a curious monotone, as if his body, not his mind, were talking, "I doubted your judgment of the glacier. The access to the summit was evidently so easy that I thought some route across would surely open out before us. I desired to surprise you; I knew you could easily overtake us. Therefore I set forth. The Eskimos hung back, but I promised them wood to follow.

"It was easy enough until we came to this crevasse. I attempted to leap across, but I slipped and fell. I do not know how it happened, but I struck several times and whirled over and over, and felt a blow upon the back of my head. It dazed me. When I came to myself I was seated upon that shelf, with my

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back against the wall. It slants in as you see, and the outer edge of the shelf is raised, so I was secure.

"But I had only half recovered my senses and I began to cry out for help. I was so much disturbed that I didn't know what was going on until I saw someone opposite. Then I think I shouted louder. Suddenly there came another shock, and I should have fallen, but someone held me up. It was Daniel. He must have leaped across."

He paused and I looked down again. The ledge, at its broadest barely a foot and a half wide, fell away into the wall, not two feet from the spot where Praed must have brought up. It was a brave leap.

"Go on," I commanded.

"Daniel laughed at me," resumed the professor, in the manner of a child reading from a book, "and waited till I got back some of my self-possession. Then he made signs to me to spring across and catch the icicles with my arms. I was afraid. He laughed again and made another sign that he would lift me across. I let him take me by the knees and lift me until my head and waist rose above

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the shelf, and then I leaned forward and we both toppled over. I caught the icicles, and he held me firm, and perhaps,—I don't know, if I had kept still——"

I did not like the look of his eyes, and I hastened to steady him.

"What did you do?" I asked. "Keep cool."

"I struggled. I squirmed with my feet in getting up and kicked him free. When I was safe I tried to help him; I meant to help him. But the ledge was empty and he lay there."

"Good God!" was all I could say.

We passed the succeeding three hours in dead silence. Praed never moved, I think, and never took his eyes from the sky above the névé basin. The Eskimos sat quietly beside the grave of their friend. I sprang across the crevasse where it narrowed, descended the shelf to the icicles, and mused upon the courage that had dared a leap to the narrow footing below me.

At last the party from the ship arrived with ropes. The leader of the Relief Party hastened in advance. His pale face turned

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red as he saw Praed, and he sprang forward with hand outstretched.

"Praed, old fellow!" he exclaimed. "By by the Lord, I'm glad to see you alive. How did you get out?"

Praed turned toward him. I couldn't see his face, but the leader fell back.

"What's the matter?" he said. "What is it?"

"It's an accident," I put in. "Daniel has fallen and is dead."

Then Praed showed the first sign of manliness that I had ever seen in him.

"It is my fault," he proclaimed. "I am to blame for his death. I demand the right to fetch up his body."

In pity for his evident wretchedness, the leader consented. We lowered the professor by a rope to the heap of blocks below. But as his weight bore upon the block where the body lay, the ice tilted and fell. Daniel fell with it. The ringing of icicles on either wall of the glacier lessened to a tinkling; the tinkling merged into a sustained harmonic like the final note of some violin sonata. The tone died away. No final crash fol-

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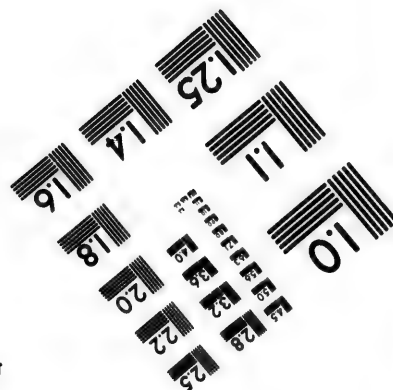
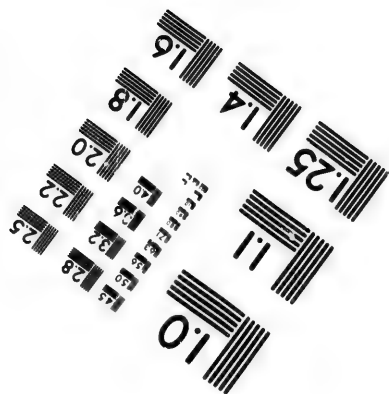
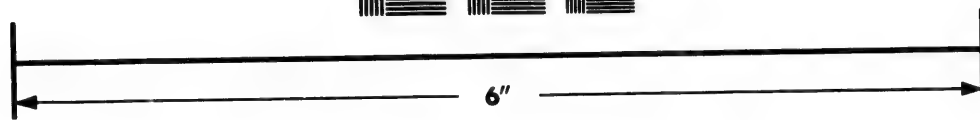
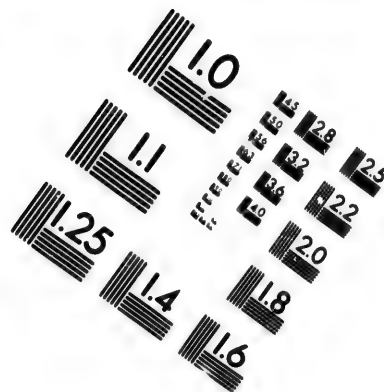
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The Education of Praed

lowed. The utmost depths were beyond our hearing.

During most of the voyage home, Praed behaved like a man in a dream. He rarely spoke, and when we addressed him he started before he replied. Only once did he show any trace of his ancient aggressive manner, and that was when someone said a slighting word of an Eskimo.

"The Eskimos," retorted Praed, "are heroes."

That was absurd. Perhaps there are three or four left in the tribe who would have done what Daniel did. The professor was pitiful in his broken condition. We deemed him a chastened man.

The other day, however, a member of our old party came to see me. There is only one topic of conversation among men who have journeyed to the far North. In the course of our Arctic gossip, I asked for news of Praed.

"Haven't you heard?" asked my friend. "He is lecturing through the West. He has won a great reputation for his courage in descending into the crevasse."

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"Hm!" I said, and both of us were silent. We were thinking of a strain of ice-music as unearthly as the Theme of the Grail, and of a vast white tomb, now doubtless afloat upon some Arctic sea. It bears what is left of a better man than Praed.

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PSALM VII: 15

I.

"WUNGA *angedkok*," explained Kioapodu.

"*Angekok*, are you?" returned Latta.

"Well, so am I—a big one. If you don't fetch me back that knife I shall say a charm, and a devil will come, and you will be turned into a brown-stone statue. Tell him that, will you, Dahlgren?"

Latta, who was a new-comer to Greenland, knew just enough pidjin-Eskimo (which is the diplomatic language north of Cape York) to be irritated because he didn't know more of it. During my year of life in the Smith Sound region I had picked up a good many words—indeed, I was semi-official interpreter to the expedition.

"*Latta ookalukto savik ooma. Ooma opdow angedkok*," I translated. I meant this to mean, "Latta say knife his. He also medi-

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cine-man;" and Kio understood, for he turned toward Latta and drew up to their highest his sixty-five inches. The movement flung his black mane away from his shoulders and forehead. There was a fire in his eyes like the glow of a star in a pool of black water.

"I, too, am *angekok*," he declaimed. "How am I to know that he sees the spirits?"

"Stunning-looking fellow, isn't he?" remarked Latta. "What does he say?"

"He wants a test of your powers," I laughed.

Latta shook his vigorous shoulders—a habit I admired in him.

"Wants a test?" he repeated. "Well, he shall have it. Tell him that to-morrow I will come to his hut, and bring a rifle. I will let him shoot at me before all his people, and he will not kill me. Tell him I will catch the bullet in my hand."

For a moment I hesitated. The thought of playing a trick upon the simple Huskies jarred my nerves. But Kioapodu only of the tribe had held himself hostile. We had detected his influence against us in certain

Psalm VII: 15

tradings for dogs. The idea of mystifying him into submission was alluring.

Besides, at that time I was a little in awe of Latta. He had joined the relay expedition with a great reputation as an African explorer, based particularly upon his success in swaying unruly tribes without killing a man.

I translated his offer to Kio.

"Let it be so," replied the Eskimo. "If he is an *angekok* I will restore the knife, though I found it and it is mine."

He stalked majestically out of our Arctic house and down the beach toward his *tupik*. Latta drew from his pocket a pencil, slit away one-half of the wood, and began to scrape the lead into powder upon a sheet of paper.

"I shouldn't care so much for the knife," he said, "if it hadn't been—a gift."

I nodded, without making comment. Latta's betrothal had been announced in newspapers brought us by the relay party.

"How are you going to beguile the 'gentle salvage?'" I asked.

"Easiest thing in the world. Draw the bullet from a cartridge and make a mock bullet out of the doctor's absorbent cotton,

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darkened with this graphite. You load the rifle in plain view of the Huskies. You'll help, won't you?"

"Ye-es," I faltered. I was flattered to be chosen as confederate by so distinguished an explorer. In those days I was a bit of a hero-worshipper.

Nevertheless, it was not without compunctions that I followed Latta along the beach the next morning to the green hill where the *tupiks* stood. The Eskimos were astir. A little group of men was collected near Kioapodu's tent. From inside came the tap, tap, tapping of tambourine-music and the howls of the *angekok*.

Latta looked a question at me.

"He's getting ready for you," I answered. "He's communing with the spirits. Most likely he's been at it all night."

Latta laughed.

"We must do this thing in proper form," he said. "Do you mind bearing a message that the great white *angekok* awaits the test? Hello, who's that?"

An Eskimo girl parted the flap of Kioapodu's tent, and paused before the opening.

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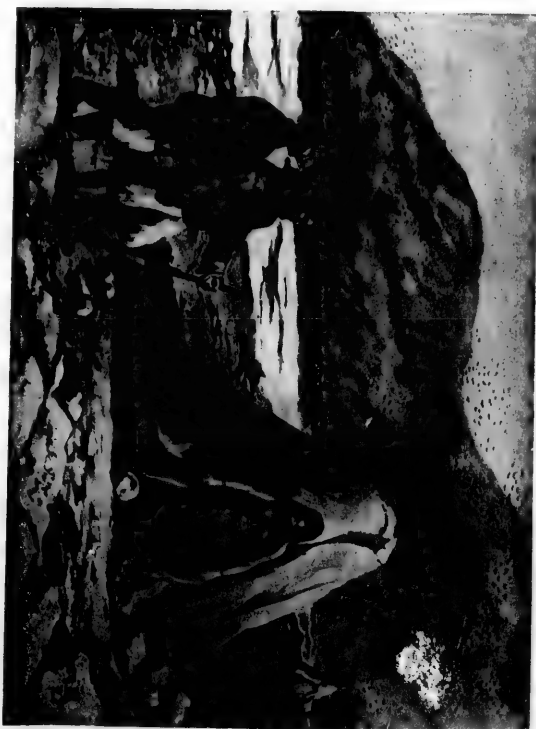
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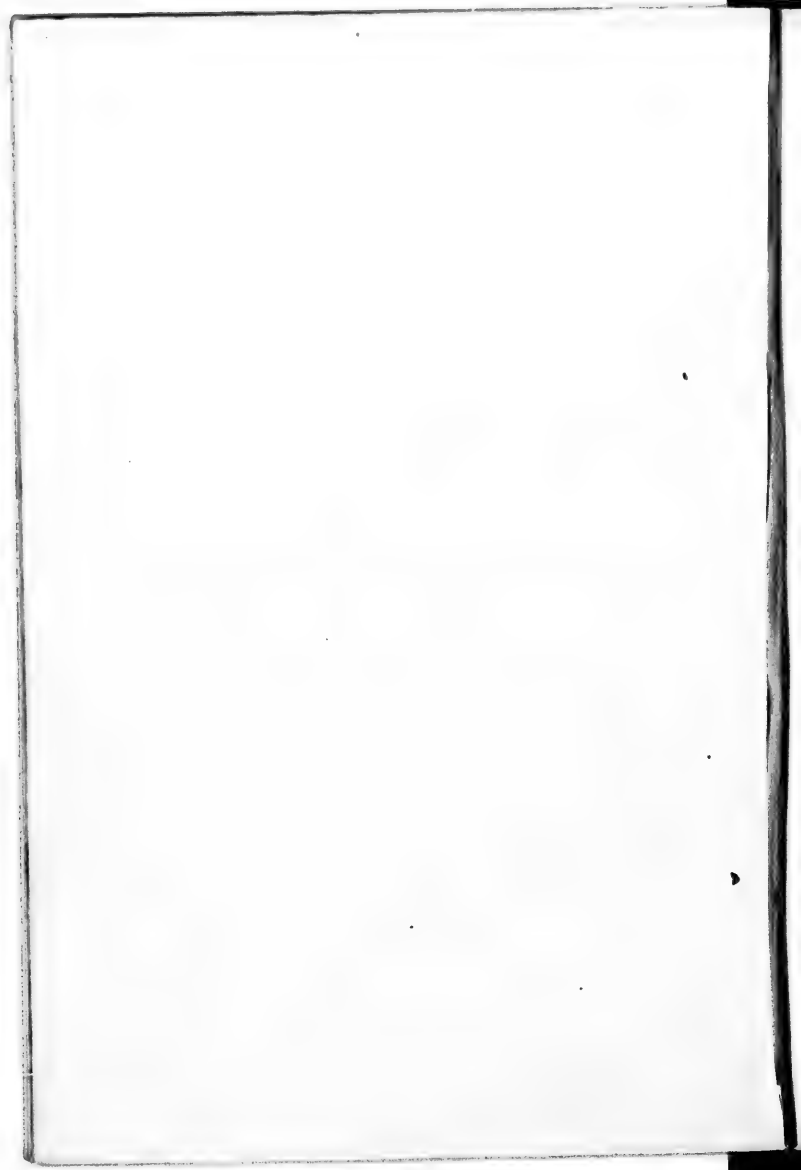
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Psalm VII: 15

Her dark hair, loosed from the ordinary woman's knot, fell over each shoulder almost to her boot-tops. She had forgotten or neglected to put on her *netcha*, and her round figure with its budding breasts shone in the morning sunlight.

"What a little beauty," murmured Latta. "Bronze Psyche in boots and trousers. Who is she?"

"Kio's daughter," I answered.

"What is her name?" asked Latta.

"Ah-we-ung-ónah."

"Ah-we-ung-ónah, Ah-we-ung-ónah," repeated Latta.

She stood for a moment, erect, with the tent-flap lifted in her hand. I suppose it is because of what followed that I see so clearly, even now, the scene of her first meeting with Latta—the pale sunlight aslant across the flat black ocean, casting long shadows behind the white bergs, brightening the green hill, softening the majestic gray cliffs behind it, and, I remember, glowing bright upon an old bit of red flannel that had blown from headquarters to Kioapodu's tent; the group of Eskimos beside the *tupik*, with

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their white bearskin breeches and wild, dark heads, and at the door the half-naked girl, straight and slender, gazing down upon Latta with haughty eyes.

Presently she turned abruptly and stooped into the *tupik*. I heard Latta blow out his breath, as if he had been holding it too long.

"Thick air this morning," he commented, in his abrupt way. "Let's beat up the wizard's quarters. By the way, here's the cartridge."

He handed to me several paper shells made to fit the old-fashioned carbines used by the Federal cavalry in the Civil War. I carried one of these awkward weapons by the strap. We had brought along a stock of them to make trade with the natives. Latta had prepared his sham skilfully. Ten feet away I could not have distinguished the cotton from the leaden bullets that lay beside it in my palm.

"Now we are ready, even as Moses for the sorcerers of Egypt," said Latta. "And behold, here comes our magician."

Kioapodu, in full cry, danced out of the tent-door. He grasped the tambourine in

Psalm VII: 15

his left hand ; with his right hand spasmodically jerking, he tapped it rhythmically. Upon the crest of the hill he paused, flinging his head from side to side, and casting his eyes to the spirits above. The Eskimo men collected in a half-circle about him. From several of the tents ran women to join a little group at a distance.

"Enter chorus," commented Latta, grimly. "There seems to be a certain tenseness in the atmosphere of this light opera. What's he singing about?"

"I can't understand the words," I replied. "It has something to do with us, though ; for see, the Eskimos are looking at us."

"Guess my cue has come," said Latta. "Are you ready?"

He strode forward, and I followed. I was a little nervous, for I didn't know what Kioapodu might excite the tribe to do. As we drew near to the medicine-man, his gestures grew wilder and his howling rose louder.

"Dahlgren," murmured Latta, "the Husky for 'look' is 'takoo,' isn't it?"

"Yes," I replied ; "shall I interpret for you?"

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Latta made no answer, but marched on up the hill. Within ten feet of the Eskimo he halted. His left arm shot straight above his head. The hand was half-closed, as if it held a small object.

"*Takoo!*" he commanded.

Kioapodu's voice ceased. Across his eyes, which were fixed upon the upraised palm, fell a beam of sunlight, reflected from some bright disc. His right hand hung, arrested, above the tambourine. A little murmur arose from the crowd.

"Hypnotized himself," said Latta, coolly, but without turning. "Come and stand here."

I stumbled hastily to his side.

"Move calmly," said Latta. "He's only in the first stage—catalepsy. He was half-hypnotized before—I knew the symptoms. I've controlled African chiefs in a war-dance with this little mirror. Now, listen," he continued, "I want you to tell me how to say this: 'I am a great *angedkok*. So are you. We will do wonderful things. You will shoot me with a rifle, and I will catch your bullet in my hand. Afterward, I will shoot at you. We will see which is stronger.' Now, Dahl-

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Psalm 111: 15

gren, think of the words and say them over
slowly and distinctly so that I may repeat
them. Be sure and make no mistakes."

I turned the sentences over in my head.
Kioapodu began to breathe audibly.

"Make haste," said Latta. "He's coming
out of it."

I framed the order as well as I could, and
Latta repeated the words after me, two or
three at a time, in a curious, intense voice.
As he uttered the concluding sounds, Kio's
eyes began to blink and to wander from the
mirror.

"Now, we'll wake him up," said Latta.
"He'll remember what he is to do."

He lowered his arm, clapped his hands
sharply, and finally strode close to the Es-
kimo and made upward passes in the air, at
either side of the dusky face.

"Wake up! wake up!" he repeated in
English.

Kio's eyes blinked strangely; his body
straightened, he heaved one or two deep
sighs, a sort of half-intelligence came into
his eyes, and he turned his head and stared
sleepily around him.

Laughter of the Sphinx

"Good!" said Latta. "Now load the gun as ostentatiously as you can with my cotton bullet, give it to him and tell him to shoot the great white *angekok*."

While I was biting off the end of the mock cartridge, ramming it home with my finger and closing the clumsy, old-fashioned breech, Latta took his stand about ten yards away, upon a rock that lifted its head three or four feet from the sod. He faced us, and folded his arms. The half-circle of Eskimos, whom I had forgotten in the excitement, closed around me, as I cocked the gun and placed it in Kioapodu's hand.

"Ready, fire!" shouted Latta. As if he understood the words, the Eskimo levelled the gun, took slow aim and pulled the trigger. The smoke flew in my eyes, and for a second I lost thought of Latta. A murmur from the Eskimos aroused me.

"*Na, na, na, na-ay!*" they whispered. The explorer stood erect, with the bullet between his fingers. For a moment he smiled, then sprang from the rock and swung toward us.

"Now it's my turn," he exclaimed, gayly. The Eskimos drew away from him, but Kio

Psalm VII: 15

remained stupidly by my side. Latta seized the gun from his hand, and pointed toward the rock. Thither Kio staggered, as obedient as a child. He mounted to the summit, turned with folded arms, and stood in precisely the posture that Latta had taken.

"What are you going to do, Mr. Latta?" I asked.

I thought the affair had better terminate. The Eskimos behind me were shrinking away even from me, whom they knew as their friend, and I feared lest they might take fright and decamp altogether. We could not afford to lose their aid to the expedition.

"Don't look as if you saw his corpse," returned Latta. "I'm going to cut off a lock of his hair. Will you load the gun?"

The man's personality was stronger than mine. Somewhat awkwardly, I made shift to prepare the cartridge, fouling my mouth with powder, I remember, as I bit off the end. The discomfort of this held my thoughts for a moment. A shrill scream startled me into looking about. Latta was standing with the rifle at his shoulder and his finger upon the trigger, but his head was turned toward the

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group of women. A girl was speeding toward the rock where Kioapodu stood motionless. She reached him with a bound, pushed him to the grass beneath, confronted us, and flung out her hand toward Latta. The missing knife, with its belt trailing behind, fell near his feet.

Latta lowered his rifle. For a moment the little half-clad Eskimo girl and the tall explorer gazed, as still as the rocks about them. Then she leapt lightly to the ground beside her father, seized his limp arm and tried to raise him.

I glanced at Latta. His body was erect, but his head hung oddly forward, as if drawn by some magnetic force, and he glared upon Ah-we-ung-ónah somewhat as I had seen him glare upon a seal that he had marked for his rifle. He was not a pleasant sight, but I could not draw my eyes from his face. I suppose the intensity of my look attracted his, for in a moment his head suddenly turned toward me and he shook his shoulders.

"The man is not dead," he said, hastily; "he's only asleep. Help me carry him to his tent."

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With that he made forward toward the rock. He passed the knife, and I picked it up. As we approached her, the girl shrank away. I do not think Latta glanced at her. As he lifted Kioapodu by the shoulders and turned to make a sign that I should raise the Eskimo's feet, I noticed that his teeth were firmly set. In silence we carried the medicine-man to his tent and laid him upon the sleeping-slab. Ah-we-ung-ónah followed and stood in the door.

"Tell her he'll sleep until to-morrow, and awake all right," commanded Latta. He pushed the girl roughly aside and made off toward the headquarters.

As best I could I translated his words, but I doubt whether Ah-we-ung-ónah comprehended. She answered, "*Ee, ee,*" but her gaze followed the figure of Latta, lessening away down the beach. When it disappeared she dived under the tent-flap and left me alone.

I was glad to find at the headquarters our leader, Van Den Zee, returned from his ten days' hunting trip. His sane presence cleared away the uncanny impression of the morn-

Laughter of the Sphinx

ing's adventure. Although I felt, somehow, as if I were betraying Latta's confidence, still, I held it to be my duty to include in my report, as chief of headquarters in the leader's absence, a detailed account of the matter.

Van Den Zee listened with his usual calmness.

"Thank you, Dahlgren," was the only comment he made. That afternoon, however, he detailed me to establish a depot of provisions thirty miles to the northward, and put Latta under my charge.

It was a three days' excursion, and during the whole time Latta never spoke except in reply to my questions. He seemed indifferent to the beauty of the cliffs that lifted their snow-crowned crests four thousand feet sheer out of the sea. He barely glanced at the magnificent bergs among which our whale-boats sailed. But the loads that he carried from the shore to the ice-cap would have broken any other man in our party. He insisted upon keeping his oar throughout the twenty-mile row back to camp, and he pulled like a sailor. The thought occurred to me

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that he was eager to arrive at headquarters. With the others I took my turn at rowing, and by the time we had hauled the boat high upon the beach I was tired, and I made straight for my bunk. It was midnight and everyone was asleep. My party was soon as deep as the rest, but I noticed vaguely, as I crawled between my blankets, that Latta's bunk was empty.

A violent shaking woke me up from the soundest of slumbers. Latta stood before me. He was laughing.

"No cause for such a kinky face," he said. "Did you keep the rifle we used—the—ah—the other morning?"

"Yes," I blundered out. "Don't do that again, though, 'thout Van Den Zee's knowledge."

"Nonsense!" laughed Latta. "Your *angekok* has gone away. Gone, tent and all, and taken his family with him. I only want the gun as a souvenir."

"Gone, has he?" drawled I. "I'm sorry for that. We needed him, and the girl could sew skins first-rate."

I routed the carbine out of a stack of arms

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in the corner of my bunk. When I turned about, Latta was staring out of the window into the sunlit night. I was so sleepy that I may have dreamed I heard him murmuring—

"Sorry she's gone? By the gods I'm not!"

In the morning he asked Van Den Zee for an assignment with the party that was going to complete the northern depot. They rowed away with two Eskimos in the crew. When they returned everyone had a word of admiration for Latta.

"The man is a wonder," said our chief hunter. "I never saw anyone pick up the country as he does. And the Huskies! His little parlor-magic trick has made slaves of them. He learned a lot of Husky, too; you will be surprised, Dahlgren; he gets on with their talk almost as well as you do. And ye gods, how he can work! He puts us up to a lot of wrinkles about packing heavy loads; he got them from his carriers in Africa, he said."

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II.

As the season wore on, Latta's worth to the expedition increased. As ethnologist he was invaluable. The natives confided in him as children confide in their parents. He drew from them not only the ordinary gossip of the tribe, but also the folk-lore, the legends, and superstitions—all the intimate thoughts that an aboriginal people usually refuse to strangers.

In our camp he was a good companion. He had dark moods, to be sure, but he never imposed them upon us. For hours at a time he wandered along the beach, with no apparent object except to walk off certain heavy frowns. When he returned to the headquarters he always wore a cheerful face. As the hours of darkness encroached upon those of light, curiously enough, his gloomy periods lessened, and in mid-winter, the season of continuous lamplight, when most of the men were beginning to fear the blue devils, Latta's mind seemed fresh and strong. If he, too, had his blue devils, he fought them off in his bunk, where he spent a great

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deal of time. At meal-hours or at loafing-hours he was always ready with stories of his exploits in the hot African forests; stories that brightened wonderfully our monotonous talk. He told them not too modestly, but he made them thrilling. I remember that I felt proud when he chose me as a listener. In those days, however, as I have said, I was a hero-worshipper.

Whether or no Van Den Zee liked him I failed to discover. Van was always inscrutable. But he made free use of Latta. When the snowfall put an end to our autumn work, he gave him charge of the dogs. We had collected a pack of two hundred half-tamed brutes that tore each other to rags, devoured—and digested—their traces if meat failed them, and crouched before nothing under the stars except a whip-lash. For white men the whip is unwieldy. Most of us slashed ourselves with it oftener than we cut the dogs, but Latta learned to pick a bit of fur from the ear of any given rebel as deftly as an Eskimo. He was master of the pack; his voice was its law.

He had charge of the food, too. By

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the middle of February our supply seemed likely to run short, and one day Van Den Zee asked me if I should mind going as Latta's assistant to fetch a new supply from a settlement four days' journey to the south.

"I can't very well put you in charge of the party," said Van, "for it's Latta's department. You won't object to going in second place, will you? I must have a steady man with him. He is a good explorer, but you know he has never taken a long sledge trip, and he has never seen heavy weather in the open. I don't think he had better go alone."

Looking back at this little talk in the light of what followed, I wonder whether Van had in mind something besides contingencies of travel. It is possible that he saw deeper than the rest of us into Latta's character. At the time, however, no suspicion entered my head that Latta still dreamed of the Eskimo girl. Pleased that Van held me to be a steady man, I easily agreed to go as assistant.

We set forth across the bay with an Eskimo, two sledges, and fourteen dogs, to bring home the walrus-skin food. For the

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first night we camped in a snow-igloo built by the Husky. It was a tiny affair, just big enough to hold the cooking-lamp and us, stretched out in our sleeping-bags. Latta undertook to make the tea. It seemed to me that his face looked haggard, but I set that down to the pale light of the alcohol.

"Dahlgren," he said, presently, "what do you suppose our friends at home would think if they could see us now?"

"Very terrified, no doubt," I replied. I knew he was thinking of the girl he was to marry, and the thought naturally brought up the image of Ae-we-ung-ónah.

"Latta," I blurted out, "do you know where Kio went?"

The next moment the hut was dark. Latta had upset the lamp. During the rest of the evening he did not speak, and on the march next day, too, he was silent. But at night, when I was taking my turn at the stove, he began, in his usual hearty tones :

"Dahlgren," he said, "you're a good fellow."

"'Praise from Sir Hubert,' you know," I laughed.

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"I'm serious," returned Latta, calmly. I
want to tell you something."

"I beg your pardon, old chap," I said.
"Go ahead. I shall be glad to hear it."

He waited for several moments before he
began.

"I don't know why I'm saying anything
about it. It's not my way to make confi-
dences. I suppose it's this endless darkness
that gives a man's imagination neurosis. Be-
sides, when two civilized men find themselves
under a dog-house of a hut in the midst of a
million square miles of snow, they come very
near to one another. What pitiful things we
are!" he burst out. "Fancy looking down
upon our hut in the midst of this stupendous
waste. A mound indistinguishable thirty
feet away, covering three black slugs crawl-
ing, crawling over an expanse so vast that
their minds cannot conceive its immensity.
What do you suppose the Arctic Spirits think
of us?"

"I've never seen any indication that they
think at all of us," I laughed. I had heard
this commonplace moralizing with that sense
of relief that comes when one's idols turn

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out flesh and blood. After all, Latta wasn't so far beyond the rest of us. I, myself, knew well the state of mind he expressed. It is but the beginning of the Arctic awe.

"What pitiful creatures we are!" repeated Latta. "What difference do our little emotions and conventions make in the midst of such forces! How the Arctic Spirits must laugh at our—our marriage laws, for example! They teach their own people better things. The Eskimos have no laws."

This personal phase also of Arctic emotion I knew well. I knew, too, that it is transient, and I contented myself with remarking:

"Wait until you have weathered a storm in one of these huts. The drift cuts off the top of your dome clean with the force of a sand-blast. If you let the snow settle upon you, you smother. But if you keep patiently patching up the holes with reindeer skins, you can outlast the wind. Your little slugs are pitiful, perhaps, but in the end they are the masters."

He made no reply, and I did not think he was impressed with my argument. I had not supposed that he would comprehend it;

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only experience replaces awe of Arctic powers with awe of man's prowess. Presently he crawled into his sleeping-bag. He had left his confidence unfinished. Going over his allusion to marriage laws, I wondered whether he had been thinking of Ah-we-ung-ónah, and was sorry because I had not led him to say more, and because I had not moralized, hinting that only by unwavering strength can Arctic forces be met. However, I doubt that any words of mine could have helped him.

III.

When I awoke, he was heating tea for breakfast. He greeted me pleasantly.

"Shouldn't wonder if we were going to have a chance to fight your sand-blast," he said. Looks stormy outside."

I shuffled off the deerskin envelope, hurried on my furs, and crawled out of doors. The twilight of noon was just beginning. Above me the stars were dim, and in the southwest they were hidden by a pile of clouds. Even in the dusk I could see that its edges were writhing. The wind moaned

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over the ice-caps, and occasional gusts swept snow-wraiths across the bay. I hauled in the draw-strings of *koolatah* and breeches. In a temperature of fifteen below zero, when the wind blows, a man is most comfortable when his furs are snuggest about him. The Eskimo kneeling by the dog-teams was disentangling the knot into which the restless creatures had interwoven their traces.

"Great-wind, *Tung-wee*?" I asked.

"*Ee*," grunted the lad.

"Good to start?"

The Eskimo rose to his feet, and scrutinized the contour of the cliffs that loomed upon our left. His eyes rested for an instant, evidently upon a landmark. Then he cast a glance at the lowering horizon.

"*Ee*," he said.

Nevertheless, I drank my tea and ate my pemmican in all haste. Latta tried at some light conversation, but I was in no mood for it.

The gusts were coming oftener by the time we were ready to start. The half disk of cloud covered a third of the sky at our right, and the fleece above was blanketing the stars. The Eskimo, who drove the lead-

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ing sledge, cracked his whip furiously above his team.

I was riding with Latta upon the larger sledge, and I noticed that instead of cutting directly across the bay, Tung-wee had swung to the left, along the shore. Presently Latta noticed it, too.

"This not good!" he shouted. "Where going?"

Tung-wee pointed to a vast buttress that hung out of the shadowy cliffs, almost above us.

"Karnah," came his voice, down a wind-gust.

Latta checked his team. I could see his eyes gleaming in the fast-gathering darkness.

"Hold on!" he exclaimed. "I won't go to Karnah!"

For a moment I must have stared at him, like a half-witted child. Then I understood. I glanced up at the sky. The clouds had passed beyond the zenith, and even as I looked rushed over star after star.

"I'm afraid there's no choice," I said, as gently as I could. "We can't stay here. The quicker, too, the better."

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I do not suppose he had appreciated the danger, but my strained tones must have warned him. He glanced uncertainly above him. A furious blast of wind drove the drift stinging into our faces. Latta shook his shoulders, and his whip-lash whirled and cracked. The dogs sprang forward.

Tung-wee's sledge, a quarter of a mile before us, was a dim point in the flying snow. Presently the cloud swept over the great buttress at our left, and darkness settled upon the bay. The sledge, even the outlines of the cliffs, disappeared. We felt rather than saw the masses of land.

My eyebrows, lashes, mustache, and the edge of my hood were stiff with ice. My feet were suspiciously comfortable, and I grasped the upstanders and rose to stamp. A star of lamplight twinkled for an instant, and disappeared in a whirl of snow.

"To the left!" I shouted. "We're almost there."

Latta's whip-lash flew. The sledge swerved aside, and bounded on. The dogs had seen the light, too. The groaning of the wind upon the ice-cap waxed to a growling just as

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we felt the lift of the beach. Two lights rose before us, but a few feet away. Suddenly the growl above us deepened into a roar.

"Don't turn for your life," I shouted. "Face the lights!" and the next instant the wind burst upon us like a solid force. The dogs halted, the lights went out. I felt for Latta, and hauling him down by main force threw myself to my hands and knees upon the ground. Pressed together, we crouched for a long minute. When the violence of the first blast spent itself, guiding Latta, with a hand upon his arm, I scrambled up the slope. In a moment, I came upon a hard mound, and a faint glow shone above me. In another moment we had crawled out of the smother into warmth and light.

The sleeping-slab at the rear of the igloo was crowded with Eskimos, who stared at us drowsily. My head was yet ringing with the storm-noise, and I could not distinguish faces. My nose was touched with frost. I tore off my furs, and bade Latta do the like. Certain after a glance that my feet were sound, I turned to inspect his. He had not taken

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off his clothes; he was gazing into the left alcove of the little hut where Ah-we-ung-ónah stood gazing back at him.

"Come, come, man!" I cried. "Off with your boots. You have no time to moon!"

He started, cast a frown at me, and slowly undressed. His left foot was white and hard. I think I could have chipped pieces from the heel with a stone.

IV.

I am bound to confess that without the little Husky girl's aid, the foot would have been doomed. But she worked over it unceasingly, first pressing snow upon it for hours, and afterward, when the frost had come out and the heel had puffed up big and red and Latta was writhing in agony, keeping it cool with seal-oil. At the end of three days the foot was going better.

Meanwhile the storm roared itself out and I took a step which I have always regretted. I left Latta in the igloo. It is possible that if I had waited there he would have found, in the presence of another man with civilized standards, support against his passion. But,

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when Tung-wee and I harnessed our dogs, Latta was still helpless with pain, and I thought I might safely leave him. I sent a Husky to fetch the doctor at once from headquarters, and started the sledges toward the south. We needed the dog-food, and I felt bound to bring it.

On the way home ten days afterward I stopped at Karnah. Latta was not there.

"Dokt came here only one sleep ago," said the natives. "He spoke loud words about the foot. He carried Lat' to white man's house on a sledge."

Alone with her until yesterday! I thought. I glanced about the igloo.

"Where are Kio and Ah-we-ung-onah?" I asked, hastily.

"They went with the sledge to white man's house," answered the Eskimos.

At headquarters I found Latta in his bunk. He greeted me with a languid smile.

"Your storm has done me up," he said. "Doctor says I mustn't walk for a month."

During the three weeks thereafter he never moved from his blankets. For our part, though we were as kind as we knew how

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to be, we had little time to pay him small attentions. Our main sledge-journey of months was at hand. We were in a flurry of preparations—testing new sledges and snow-shoes, lugging provisions to the ice-cap, completing our outfits of clothing. The floor of the house was crowded with women, sitting cross-legged, and stitching away at *koolatahs* and *kamiks*; and among them I noticed Ah-we-ung-ónah. She had taken a place snug against the foot of Latta's bunk, and while she was sewing she talked steadily. I thought grimly that the sick man would hardly miss us.

He did not miss us. A month afterward nine of us—the supporting party—hurried into the headquarters. We had bid good-speed to Van Den Zee and four others upon their brave journey of twelve hundred miles across the snow-desert, and had returned to carry out, if possible, minor explorations. Of these explorations I was in charge. Two or three of my party were staggering with frost-bitten feet, and I hoped to find Latta fit for work. My first question bore upon his health.

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"His foot is well enough," replied the man who had been left to watch the house, "but——"

"But what?" I queried.

"But he isn't here just now. He doesn't spend much time at the quarters. He is studying the Eskimos, and I believe he is experimenting with life in a snow-igloo."

"Whose?" I asked, hastily.

"Kio's, I think," answered the man. His eyes did not meet mine.

I restrained my frown, tried to say something about Latta's indefatigability, and turned to other business. I noticed as I passed Latta's bunk that, although his own weapons were stacked in a corner, the carbine with which he had achieved his great spectacular success had disappeared.

As soon as I could, I made time to visit the angekok's *iglooyah*. Latta was there. He lay half asleep upon the deerskins, and bending over him, with such an expression of face as only a new-made wife wears, sat Ah-we-ung-ónah.

I must have uttered an exclamation, for she turned her head. Perceiving who it

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was, she showed her white teeth in a slow smile. Then she laid her hand upon Latta's cheek.

"Lat'," she said; "Lat', de-ar!"

The English word sent the blood to my heart.

"Lat'," she continued in Eskimo, "wake up; Dahlg' has returned."

Latta scrambled to his knees and faced me. His mouth was open. I do not like to see a man open his mouth when he is startled.

"How are you, Latta?" I asked, as quickly as I could.

"Oh, how are you, Dahlgren?" he mumbled. "Didn't know it was you."

I turned away so that unwatched he might regain his self-possession.

"I'm glad to see you fit again," I said. "*Chimo*, Ah-we-ung-onah!"

"*Chimo-o-o*," answered the woman, with a bright little laugh. She looked happy.

"You're hard at work, they tell me." I tried to keep my tone free from sarcasm.

"Ye-es," stammered Latta. "Yes, hard at work. I've got enough for a book about

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Husky manners and customs. I'll tell you what it is, Dahlgren," he went on, with evident effort to be enthusiastic, "the Eskimo knows how to live in his own country. Our ridiculous big houses, which have to be warmed with stoves, are nothing to these little huts, where the heat of the lamp and of the people keep the thermometer to eighty degrees."

"Yes, I've tried the huts," I broke in, shortly. I had no wish to hear Latta's rhapsodies. "Do you think you could leave your comfort for a month, and work with me in Ellesmere Land?"

Latta hesitated, and spoke rapidly to Ah-we-ung-ónah. I could not catch what he said.

"Yes," he answered presently. "My foot still troubles me a little bit, but I guess I can go."

"Be ready at sunrise to-morrow, then. Good-by—Good-by, Ah-we-ung-ónah."

"By," answered the woman. The smile had left her face.

As I rose from the entrance of the little den, Kio came up. He carried the carbine

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slung over his shoulder in good soldier fashion.

V.

When he joined us in the morning, Latta was glum and listless. He shirked his share of loading the whale boat upon the sledge. When all was ready to start, I espied him near Kio's *igloo* talking with Ah-we-ung-ónah, and it was only after I had twice hailed him that he broke away from her. She instantly disappeared within the hut, and Latta thought it necessary to explain, as he hastened toward me, that he was giving some directions about the making of a pair of *kamiks*. I replied only with an "Ah." If the girl had been an American, I should have said that she was crying.

"Woof!" exclaimed Latta, as we crawled under the boat for shelter, at the end of the day's march. "Woof! I'm tired." He threw himself at full length upon the snow.

His task during the day had been merely keeping the dogs at work, whereas the rest of us had been hauling at the sledge. The men, out in the cold, were throwing up a

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Psalm VII: 15

wind-guard of snow around the boat, and I was establishing a kitchen. I was fagged-out and cross, and I answered impatiently:

"You find taking ethnological observations pleasanter?"

"I heard Latta turn over, and I knew he was looking at me. Presently he sighed.

"Wish to Heaven I'd never frozen that foot!" he exclaimed.

"I wish to Heaven you never had!"

He drew several heavy breaths in silence. At last he said, "Dahlgren, I can't work any more. I've tried. I believe I'm under a spell. I'm getting superstitious. I'm bewitched by some damned Arctic spirit."

"Is she so spiritual?" I asked.

"Yes," he burst out; "she is. You wouldn't believe it; she has ideas. She is unwashed, if you like, and a savage, but she has fascinating thoughts. I'm not altogether a brute," he protested, in deprecatory tones.

"Latta," interrupted I, "it's not my business; but aren't you going to be sorry for this when you get home?"

"I'm not going home!" he flashed out. "I've burned my bridges. I'm going to live

Laughter of the Sphinx

here for the rest of my life. I couldn't go home."

I tossed a handful of tea into the boiling water, and lifted the kettle from the lamp.

"That, Mr. Latta," I said, "is a matter to be settled between yourself and your sense of honor. Will you call the men to tea?"

At the end of the next day Latta complained that his foot was on fire with pain, and at noon of the succeeding day I gave him some pemmican and sent him back to headquarters—ostensibly with an order, for I did not wish to disgrace him before the men. Nevertheless, they had marked his laziness, and when we returned—baffled after six weeks of the toughest labor I ever endured, dragging the boat over ice-hummocks ten to fifteen feet high, only to lose her in the crushing floes of the open strait—when we lay about the house to recover our forces, the party showed Latta little friendship. The men were too courteous to snub him, but there was no warmth in their politeness. Latta discovered their contempt at once, and enhanced it by his deprecating manners. At last, however, he almost ceased

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Psalm VII: 15

to visit us. The Eskimos who lounged in and out of headquarters told us that he rarely came to see them. But evidently he took up a good deal of their attention, for his name frequently started out in their conversations among themselves.

One night—one of the last dark nights that preceded the summer of continuous sunlight—he came hurrying into headquarters. I happened to be alone.

"Mr. Dahlgren," he asked, "will you give me a saucer of alcohol and a handful of salt?"

"Certainly," I answered. While I was rattling among our stores for an alcohol-can, he volunteered an explanation.

"You see, there is a discussion among the Huskies as to whether I am really an *angekok* or only a fraud, and I am—er—urged to give them some new magic."

Familiarity breeds contempt, thought I.

What I said was, however, "All right, old man. Don't frighten them away from us."

The next afternoon there was a lively discussion among the Eskimos that came to headquarters. Latta's name was tossed

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about like a shuttlecock, and at last we inquired what had happened.

"Is Lat' an *angekok*?" replied a grave old Husky. "If he is an *angekok*, why did he let the cold-devils injure his foot? Why did he not charm them away? Why will he no longer let us shoot at him? Ah-we-ung-ónah asked him to prove that his *tornak* has not deserted him. To-night we are to hear his charm-song."

Next day they stalked about silent and solemn. Lat', they said, had called spirits with fire to show men and women how they would look when they were dead. For the time being his prestige rose as high as ever.

When the summer sun drove the Eskimos from their houses of stone and snow into the sealskin tents, we saw still less of Latta, for his *tupik* was pitched a couple of miles down the beach. By the first day of August, when the relief-ship arrived from New York, he had almost ceased to be a part of our environment.

Amid the heavy mail from home were a dozen blue envelopes addressed to Latta in the same large, firm handwriting. For two

Psalm VII: 15

or three days they lay upon the table. He must have known that they had come, but he never appeared at headquarters. At last, fearing lest the relief party would suspect something wrong, I locked the letters in my drawer. I hadn't the courage to carry them to him.

Upon the 10th of August our brave young leader and his party, safe and triumphant, returned from their sledge-journey. In my report to Van Den Zee I included a carefully prepared account of Latta's behavior. Van listened with a seriousness unusual even for him.

"May I see the letters?" he asked, when I had finished. He studied the superscription for some moments before he spoke.

"The man must go home at once. He must go home and be married."

"Married!" I exclaimed.

"Yes. There is good in him yet. I was afraid of something like this. You know as well as I that a savage land weakens a man at his weakest point. Every one of us here is somewhat touched with savagery. Latta's takes the form of—of inconstancy. In civil-

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ization, with a strong woman to support him—and the woman who wrote those letters is strong—his judgment will come back."

"But the girl," I began.

"She will understand and forgive him if I can pick up character from writing."

"Yes," I stammered. "I was thinking of *this* girl—Ah-we-ung-onah."

"Oh," said Van Den Zee. "Well, she is an Eskimo. She'll forget."

He strode down the beach with the letters in his pocket. Two hours later he returned. His cheeks were lined, as I once saw them after he had worked for three days without food.

"It's all right," he said. "He's going home. Hush the matter up among the fellows."

That night Latta slept at headquarters. Word was given out that he had completed a fine series of ethnological observations, and was in haste to go home and present them to the scientific world. He worked eagerly upon his preparations for departure, and rarely spoke to any of us except Van Den Zee, with whom he held long conversa-

Psalm VII: 15

tions. His eyes looked absently. His cheeks were sunken and pale. The relief party were enthusiastic over his energy, and what they called his power of reserve.

I was going home, too, and as my bunk was opposite his, I interchanged packing services with him. He rendered them with pathetic eagerness. Once in helping me to strap tight a bundle of narwhal horns, his grip slipped and a letter jerked out of the pocket of his leather jacket. It was unopened.

The morning of our departure was warm and sunny. The party which was to remain for another winter, together with the Eskimos, gathered upon the beach to see us off. As each boat-load left the shore, the white men fired a salute and the Eskimos shouted.

Latta and I were to go in the last boat. It was waiting for us at the water's edge. I had thrust myself into the crowd of Eskimos to bid farewell to many faithful friends. Presently I noticed Latta conversing seriously with Ah-we-ung-ónah and Kio.

The girl was tricked out in strange finery. Beads, scissors, a mirror, and a packet of

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needles hung by a thong from her neck. Latta must have taught her to bedeck herself, for Eskimo women take little thought of display. He tossed over her head another thong fastened to something heavy (it looked like a bullet) and said a word in her ear. She repeated the word over and over and over again, and laughed. I do not think that she realized that she would never see him again. Perhaps he had told her that he would return. At last he kissed her in the American fashion, turned and strode toward the boat.

The Eskimos watched him.

"He is a great *angekok*," said someone near me.

"*Nakitowa*," contradicted another; "he is a man who lies!"

Ah-we-ung-onah whirled around. Her eyes were glowing disks, and her hands opened and closed, but she spoke quietly.

"He is a great *angekok*. He is a great *angekok*," she repeated. "You say he is not. You shall see. What *angekok* of our people dares to catch a flying bullet? Take notice!"

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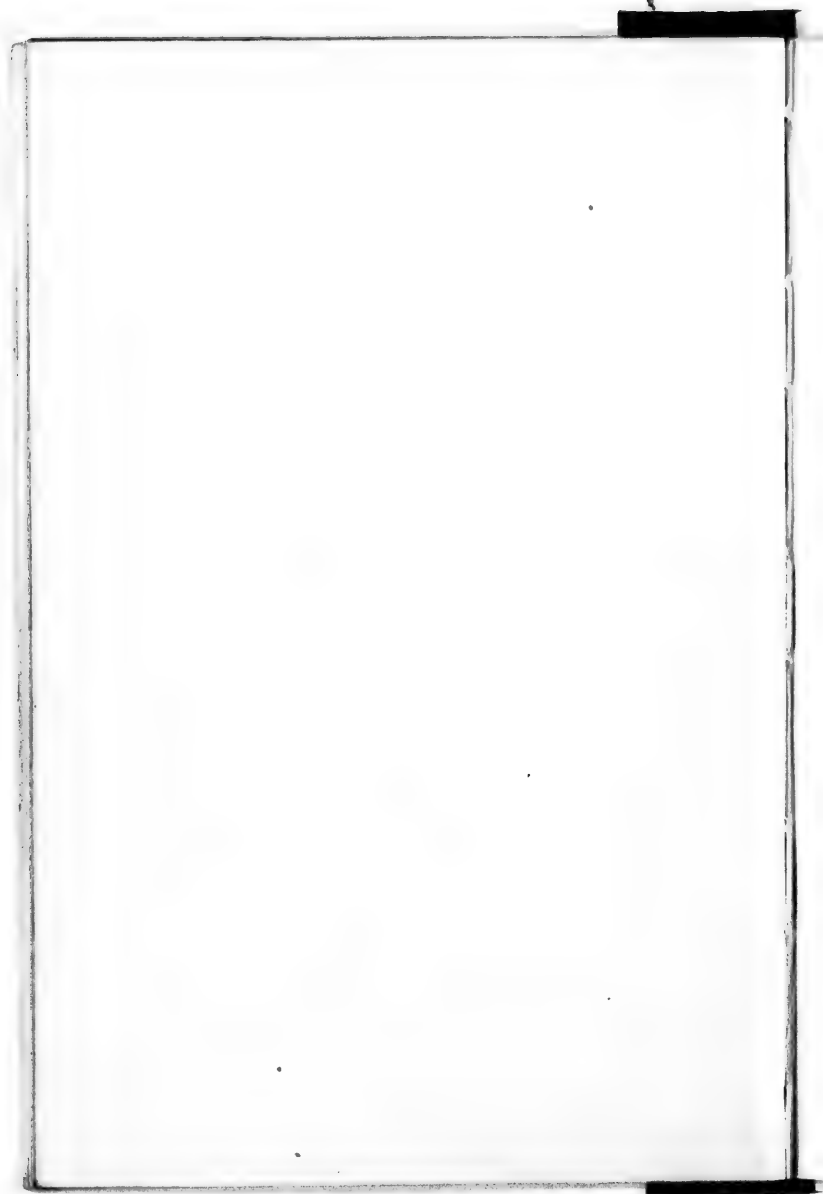
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She snatched the carbine from Kio's hand.

"Lat'," she called; "Lat'."

Latta paused and turned about.

"Lat'," she continued in English. "See-ee!
Kee-eepsa-ake!" and with that she levelled
the rifle and shot him through the heart.



AN ARCTIC PROBLEM

I.

"WOMEN in the party? Two women, you say?"

"Wife of the leader and wife of the doctor," I explained.

Billy laid upon the table his ugly bulldog pipe, rose from his chair, slouched over to the window and stared out on Fifth Avenue. Apparently the afternoon parade was not satisfactory, for when he turned, his eyebrows were pinched together and the corners of his mouth were screwed down.

"Great Scott, man!" he exclaimed. "Stop that laughing and tell me what creatures like these, with rats, I'm told, in their hair and swamps in their hats, want in Greenland."

"Think of the effect on the Husky men," I suggested.

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"No—but, seriously, Dahlgren," expostulated Billy, "why on earth should women want to go with an Arctic expedition? Are they after glory? They might jump from the Brooklyn Bridge. Are they blue-stockings? There are always nice little professors ready to do the courier of nature for such in the suburban fields. How will they amuse themselves in the north? There is no opera and no one to flirt with except Eskimos."

"Indignation hath made thee eloquent, Billy," jested I. "As for flirting, there are the members of the party. But if you hadn't spent your life in the society of bugs you would know that often young wives like to follow their husbands."

Billy stared at me over his lighted match.

"Oh," he admitted, "is that it?"

"Well, he resumed, "even then I think it's a mistake. They will shiver through the winter and make every one uncomfortable."

"Stuff! They can wear fur clothes and stay in headquarters. It will be warm enough there."

An Arctic Problem

"True, but if they don't take exercise in the night they will go into hysterics. Four months of darkness is bad enough for men, let alone women."

"Not so sure," I pointed out. "Women are used to controlling their nerves; men don't know how."

"Do you mean to say, Dahlgren, that you want them to go?" He eyed me sharply, and I was silent.

"Huh!" grunted Parsons, and we were both silent.

"This is how it is, Billy," I explained at last. "Whatever I may think of the plan, I think more of the leader. If Van Den Zee is going to make a mistake in taking along his wife, I want to be there to help him out of it—and so do you, you old fake. We've all been through too much together to fall apart now."

"Huh!" assented Billy. Men who have weathered the Arctic winter together are bound together by a bond that resists even the wiles of women.

"Who are the other members?" asked Billy presently.

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"All new men ; twelve all told. Surgeon's name is Tremont—Boston man."

"Bacteriologist," commented Parsons. "I've heard of him."

"His wife's an artist. One of her reasons for going north is the ice, which she means to paint. I've never seen her, but they say she is a woman of birth, culture and brilliancy."

"All those talents wasted on Greenland," growled Billy.

"Perhaps she'll diffuse them on us," I answered. "Taxidermist and chief hunter Bunker."

"Theophilus G. Bunker, of Nebraska," grinned Parsons. "Knew him in the northwest. He's a good fellow."

"Meteorologist, a man named Devoe ; Pierre Devoe, I think."

I paused, for Billy took his pipe from his mouth and tugged his shaggy whiskers. These were signs of agitation.

"Do you know him ?" I asked.

"Is he a little black man with a curly mustache, like a barber's ?"

"Yes—in a general way."

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"Effect of hair-oil and musk."

"A little, yes."

Billy knit his brows. "Yes," he said, slowly, "I have seen him. How did he come to be chosen?"

"Request of the Academy of Science, I believe. Van told me he knew nothing about him. He isn't expected to work in the field, only to look after the instruments at headquarters."

"The man I saw was said to be the son of an Indian woman," resumed Billy. "I don't think he was particularly good stuff."

"He's coming here this afternoon," said I.

"He wants to get some points about equipment."

Presently he arrived. Billy's description, I thought, had used him a little roughly. To be sure his hair was shiny and his mustache small and impertinent, but that was not his fault. His trousers were neatly creased, and to that, after a moment of consideration, I attributed Billy's contempt. My friend spent his life in out-of-the-way lands, among strange peoples. To join the expedition he had hurried away from a fascinating tributary of the

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Amazon, where butterflies were as large as sparrows and as resplendent as birds of paradise, and where clothes were canvas. Except Van and me, whom he held to be anomalies, he rated as "fops" all men who wore creased trousers.

When I introduced Devoe he said, "How are you?" in his big voice, unrolled a chart and buried his face in it.

Devoe had a flat nose and a curious habit of distending and contracting his nostrils in his many moments of excitement. The thought occurred to me that perhaps, in a previous state of existence, he had been a rabbit.

"Well," I began, "did you buy the snow-glasses?"

"No," replied Devoe, airily, "I couldn't. I heard that there were to be ladies with us, and I hadn't the heart for sordid details. I walked upon the avenue waiting for our appointment to come due, and now I am here howling for tips. Who are the fair ones?"

"They are both married," I answered, soberly.

"That don't cut any ice," he began. "I

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mean," he added, hastily, as I glanced up, "er, you understand, of course, that I mean I'm not looking for a spoon—for sentiment. I only think it would be a corking good thing to have ladies along—in case a fellow got sick, you know."

"Very handy, no doubt," I said.

"Livingstone says one is a peach—a great beauty—and that both of them are howling swells."

"Very likely," I remarked, shortly, "I have never seen either of them. What about those smoked glasses? The shops will be closed."

"Oh, they can wait till to-morrow," returned Devoe. "But I must go. Got to bid a long farewell to lots of despairing creatures. S'long. See you aboard the ship to-morrow."

Billy poured over the map until the meteorologist's dapper boots had tapped down a flight of stairs. His hand nestled in his whiskers. "Dahlgren," he said, "that man has got to be watched. He tried to carry off a half-breed girl on his horse, out in Dakota, and had to leave town to save his neck."

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I stared at him until he nodded a confirmation of this story.

"Think we'd better tell Van?" I asked. Billy puffed a long time in silence.

"No," he said, at last. "Perhaps the fellow is trying to be decent. We don't want to spoil his chance in life. We'll just keep watch of him. It's a pity if two men that stand six feet apiece and don't lack common sense can't control a monkey like that. All the same, I wish the Academy had chosen a pleasanter meteorologist."

II.

Our friends came to see us off. The decks of our ship, cramped at best and littered with barrels of crackers, tanks of alcohol, bundles of snow-shoes, piles of wood for the house, were crowded with people chiefly clad in fresh spring gowns, which they lifted daintily above the layer of coal-dust that covered everything, for the lading of fuel was not yet completed.

Little eddies swirled through the crowd. The centre of each was a member of the

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party, repeating over and over again to fresh influxes of guests :

"The hold of the ship is one mass of transverse beams—to resist ice-pressure. The bow is the strongest part. When we are among the ice floes, you know, we break a way through by ramming." . . . "Yes, the shock knocks down people on deck sometimes." . . . "Oh, undoubtedly, Miss Smith, it will be cold ; it is sometimes in the Arctic regions ; but we don't expect to suffer much." . . . "Heroes? Ah, that's very good of you ; you'd go—you know you would—if you were a man."

In an hour or so I wearied of this kind of talk and exchanged lifts of the eyebrows, over the hats, with Billy, who leaned solitary against the rail. The thought came to me that I would make him share my burden of hospitality, and I pushed across the deck.

Beside him stood a little woman swaying under a foliaginous hat. Her face I could not see, for she was bending over the rail, but her hair I noticed was thick and dark.

I saw Billy glancing furtively at her, and knew that duties as host were weighing down

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a spirit used to freedom. In a moment the spirit burst away in a sigh, and Billy turned to his companion :

"Er," he said, "can I explain anything about the ship to you, madam?"

"Thank you," returned a surprisingly deep voice. "I shall be delighted to learn, but there will be plenty of time. I am going, too. I am Mrs. Tremont."

"Oh! I beg your pardon," said Billy, and returned to his wonted silence.

She threw him one or two coquettish glances, and I had a glimpse of cheeks as red as the roses upon her hat, and of eyes as dark as her hair.

"I am waiting for my husband and some friends," she said, "but I don't suppose they will come any sooner if I stare at the wharf. If you will talk with me I shall be much obliged. Forgive me—you are Dr. Parsons, aren't you?"

Billy made one of those splendid bows which many shy men have at their command.

"I have heard Mr. Van Den Zee describe you," said the little woman, roguishly. "You have the reputation of a silent man, who

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considers women fit for nothing but wearing clothes."

"They do it very gracefully," replied Billy.

"Excellent," she retorted. "They didn't tell me you were a courtier. I am emboldened at once to ask you—don't you think it will be nice to have me with you in the north?"

Her eyes laughed at his. "Look out, Billy, old boy," was my thought. But Billy's reply came gravely.

"I think you would be more comfortable at home," he said.

A flash of anger drove the mischief out of her eyes.

"I intend," she said, rather haughtily, "to make the members of the party more comfortable than if I were at home. And I can do it."

Billy's hand went to his whiskers. "I hope you may, madam," he replied.

A touch upon my shoulder drew my attention from his dialogue.

"Oh, Mr. Dahlgren," whispered Devoe, "that is Mrs. Tremont, isn't it? Looks like

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a picture I used to see of the temptation of St. Anthony. Introduce me, will you?"

"I don't know her," I objected.

"Don't you? Well, Parsons seems to be *o me-er*, as the French say. I'll get him to turn me off."

He hustled up to Billy and whispered in his ear. Amusement again took possession of Mrs. Tremont's eyes.

"Certainly," blurted out Billy. "Mrs. Tremont, Mr. Devoe, our meteorologist."

"Happy to know you," began Devoe, at once. "It was a pleasant moment when I heard that you were to go along."

I watched for the hauteur to dispossess her sense of fun. But the "this-is-a-new experience" expression still lighted up her face.

"You believe that I shall not be a drag upon the party," she laughed.

"When can woman be out of place?" responded the meteorologist, gallantly. "We shall be delighted, one and all, to welcome you as a sister explorer. I admire the new woman."

Billy bowed himself away, seized my arm,

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led me aft to the cabin, which had not been opened to the crowd, and lighted his pipe.

"Our little friend cuts a shine in the world," I suggested.

"He'd cut an admirable hole in the dock water," growled Billy.

For half an hour in silence, we listened to the trampling upon the quarter-deck above us. Steps and voices in the companionway broke off our reveries, and Van, with a party of friends, hurried into the cabin. While Billy and Van were gripping each other's hands with the fervor of friends long separated, I took note that the women were gathered in a tear-stained group around a slender creature, whose delicate face, lighted up by great gray eyes, rose above the loftiest hat. I felt that she must be my friend's wife, and for once I doubted Van's judgment. It was not that she would be a burden upon us; I could not fancy her adding to our discomforts. But I did fancy her in the roughness of Arctic quarters and the roar of an Arctic storm, and I pitied her. Her golden hair and smooth skin looked too fragile for wild life.

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"Dahlgren," interrupted Devoe, "Mrs. Tremont wants to be introduced to you."

"Yes," added the deep voice at my side. "I've been reading your praises for a year in the newspapers, and I feel as if I knew you already. Come at once and look at my skis. I am an expert ski-runner, you know. I learned in Norway."

She led the way to her state-room.

"I am eager to have you men understand," she went on, while she was undoing a bundle of traps and scattering them about the little cabin, "that we women are going to be good comrades. Mrs. Van Den Zee is afraid you will find us in the way. I am not going to be in the way—ever. I shall run on snow-shoes, and shoot and drive dogs with any of you. Damn this string!" she added, looking up at me with a confidential little laugh.

"Let me cast it off," I volunteered.

"Will you, please? Thank you. Now here are my skis. Aren't they dainty. Should you like to help me put them on?"

A hail from Van excused me. The moment of farewells had come. Mine were

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soon over and I entertained myself in watching those of Devoe. He had spoken truth about the despair of his friends. His gray sombrero, amid half a dozen hats, looked like a mushroom in a flower garden. The faces beneath the flowers were wistful. Some were red with tears; the owners of others, I suspected, did not dare to cry upon their complexions. Devoe himself was not perturbed. He left his companions to talk with a reporter, and to furnish his photograph for publication. By the time he had finished, the skipper had bundled his disconsolate party down the gang-plank, and Devoe had to wave his farewells from the shrouds. He clung there, flourishing his hat toward the fluttering handkerchiefs, until we were far down the river.

III.

Eight bells struck—midnight. A mist lazied over Smith Sound. The great copper disc of the sun hung low above a frozen strait that stretched exasperatingly away into the sky. Its rugged crests and the pinnacles of icebergs prisoned in the field shone like

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some half-translucent marble. The lofty, terraced cliffs of Greenland glowed with elusive greens and crimsons, and above them shimmered a rosy haze. The snow-clad mountains upon the American coast, dead white in the shadow of a northern peak, waited in mighty tranquillity.

The ship was steaming northward toward the ice-fields through a breathless world. Upon the flat sea new ice was forming dull blotches; nothing else marred the glossy surface except a faint ripple when a seal lifted his curious head in the distance. As we neared the edge of the field, the propeller paused, and suddenly the beating of our hearts startled us.

Mrs. Van, seated beside us upon the fore-castle deck, looked timidly at Billy.

Hers was one of the faces that seem to be always wondering at the griefs of ages, and at night, against the solemnity of the north, it looked more than ordinarily childish and pathetic.

"The Arctic Sphinx has wonderful moods," sympathized Billy.

"I am glad you said that," she murmured.

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"I was afraid if I talked about it the men would call me sentimental."

"Do you mean," I asked, "that you feel as if the supernatural were always at hand up here?"

"Exactly," she said. "At the first glimpse of the coast down south in the fog I was absurdly concerned for Greenland. It was so desolate and rugged that I had somehow the feeling that the spirits were neglecting it. It is only since I have seen it at midnight that I have begun to understand the tenderness of their care. I was afraid of them until yesterday, when we rowed into that tiny harbor, with its cliffs so high that I felt as if they must fall upon us, and saw that blue glacier and the brave little poppies nestling almost against its flank. Then I felt that spirits which could cherish anything so exquisite must be kindly. You find me ridiculous, I am afraid, with my spirits."

"Please don't mistake me," I said. "Men have their moments of sentiment, too. I understand, and I know Billy does, that the gods live in Greenland. What I was objecting to was your feeling of trustfulness. They

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glorify their cliffs with rosy sunlight if you like, but for all that they batter them with gales. They have shown us kindness, but upon that ridge to starboard is the grave of Sontag, whom they froze; and behind yonder cape is the island where they starved seventeen men of Greely's party, and the ice with which they crushed the Proteus and the Polaris, and with which they would smash us if we should venture too far. The spirits are beautiful, but they are treacherous."

"They will never harm us, though," interposed Billy, quickly. "Your husband is an old acquaintance of theirs, and knows how to humor them. We shall let you see only their pleasant side."

"Thank you," she replied, gratefully.

While I was regretting my clumsy speech and admiring Billy's unwonted thoughtfulness, a sailor, silent as even sailors are in the Arctic stillnesses, shuffled forward, carrying an ice-anchor. The ship glided with a slight shock against the field, and was presently fast to a hawser.

The shock broke the spell of our communion. Mrs. Van rose, smiled a leave-

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taking, and made her way aft. Billy watched her gravely, and I watched Billy. When she had disappeared, he turned, caught me smiling, and, in spite of himself, smiled too.

"You are thinking, Dahl," he said, "that I don't so much regret the presence of women."

"Heavens!" I said, "what's coming next? Our Billy with intuitions!"

"Well, you are right. Women dare to talk about what you and I don't know how to express. Besides, I must confess that I feel rather puffed up at the thought of helping to keep harm away from that child."

"Do you feel puffed up at the thought of keeping it away from Mrs. Tremont?" I asked. "If you do, now's your chance to offer. She's coming; I hear her voice."

"No, by Jove!" exclaimed Billy. "I've got to oil my gun for walrus. You tend to Mrs. Tremont."

"She doesn't need us," I observed. "She's got Devoe; also, she is wearing bloomers."

He hastened away, and I mounted the fore shrouds to the cross-trees. When I was comfortably established, I noticed that Mrs.

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Tremont was laboring after me. Devoe climbed by her side with a protecting air.

I helped her to scramble upon the platform, and she seated herself in triumph.

"There!" she exclaimed. "Who says a woman is out of place at sea? Isn't it fine?" she rattled on. "I must do a water-color of this. It reminds me of Mr. Carroll's poem. Do you know it?"

"The sun was shining on the sea,
Shining with all his might;
He did his very best to make
The billows smooth and bright;
And this was odd, because it was
The middle of the night."

"Beautiful!" said Devoe, enthusiastically.

"It's the 'Walrus and the Carpenter,'" she went on. "All children are brought up on it. I think Mr. Carroll must have visited Greenland, don't you, Mr. Dahlgren? There are walrus in the north, I'm told."

"Listen!" I said, with as much dramatic manner as I could muster up at short notice. Presently a hollow barking rang through the stillness.

"Is it a dog?" she asked.

"No," I answered; "it's a walrus. We

An Arctic Problem

have come up here expressly to hunt him for dog-food."

"A hunt? I am going, too," she announced. "I have a gun."

I hesitated, and then evaded the responsibility.

"Volunteer to Mr. Van Den Zee," I suggested.

"Of course," admitted Mrs. Tremont. "But, Mr. Dahlgren," she added, rather piteously, "will you help me to get down? Since I have been here I have been looking, and it seems higher than I thought."

Devoe fixed her feet upon the ladder and I supported her arm, and after ten minutes of labor and exclamations we landed her safe upon the deck. She thanked us graciously, and hurried aft to Van, who was seeing the boats overboard. I called together the party of which, as second in command of the expedition, I had charge—Billy and two sailors—and jumped into the dinghy. Just as I had ordered the men to give way, Mrs. Tremont appeared at the rail.

"Oh, please wait," she called. "Mr. Van Den Zee says I am to go with you."

Laughter of the Spinster

She passed down a tiny Winchester, with a stock all silver filigee-work, kept us waiting while a sailor let down the ladder, and descended cautiously into the boat. Around her waist was a cartridge-belt full of ammunition that might have been effective against Arctic hares. Billy grunted, and shifted to the bow, so that she could sit beside me.

"Mrs. Van Den Zee is going, too," she exclaimed, as soon as she was seated. "She's going in her husband's boat. Do hurry, please. I want to be first to shoot a walrus."

As we drew near the ice floes upon which the great brutes were sunning themselves, Mrs. Tremont tightened her belt and threw a cartridge out of her rifle to be sure that it was properly loaded. "I'm an old sports-woman," she explained. "I've shot deer with this rifle in the Adirondacks. What fine marks walrus are," she chattered nervously on. "Not half as hard to shoot as deer. Why, they lie right down like big slugs and let you stalk them. I don't think much of your walrus, Mr. Dahlgren. I expected to have a battle with them. There, one has raised his head. How imperious

An Arctic Problem

he looks, as if we were impertinent to hunt him. Is it time to shoot?"

"If you like," I said. "Let her run, men; we're near enough."

The walrus all about us had begun to flop from the floes into the water. Mrs. Tremont and Billy fired at the same instant, and the big bull that had been staring at us, fell upon the ice. Mrs. Tremont screamed with delight. "I've killed one!" she cried out. "Do let us get him. I'll have his head mounted for my dining-room."

"Let's leave him there and get some others first," I suggested. "Don't you want to shoot some more?"

She looked about dubiously. The floes were bare. At the sound of the shots the herd had disappeared. In the distance black heads bobbed up to survey us, and from all quarters came the hoarse barking of bulls calling to arms. Billy jerked out his empty shell, and loaded a fresh cartridge into the chamber of his rifle.

"There seem to be none near enough to shoot," said Mrs. Tremont. "I'm disgusted with walrus; they are cowards."

Laughter of the Sphinx

For reply I pointed to a spot on our star-board side, where several heads together indicated a gathering of the herd. The heads rose, disappeared, rose again, nearer and nearer, until the water, two hundred feet away, was thick with them. Suddenly, apparently by concerted arrangement, the walrus threw themselves into a sort of rank, lifted their heads high above the water, and charged upon us. Many walrus hunts had I seen, but in this, as in all fights with the noble creatures, I lost sense of everything except a confusion of foam, an oncoming black mass, great glaring eyes, and long gleaming tusks. I do not know how long the fight lasted. I do know that in the face of our three rifles the herd dashed within oar's length of us, and I think it would have reached the boat but for the bodies of its leaders, which it pushed against her sides. At last, however, the fire was too hot, and with broken ranks the walrus turned and fled.

When they had disappeared beneath the water I became conscious that in the midst of the tumult I had been hearing a succes-

An Arctic Problem

sion of loud cries and orders, and the words, "Take me away!" echoed in my ear. The cries had ceased; but moans came from the bottom of the boat, where Mrs. Tremont was crouched, with her face hidden in her hands. At first my assurances that the danger was over drew from her only an augmentation of the moanings, and I had the boat put about toward the ship. At the motion of the men, Mrs. Tremont lifted her head and gazed wildly over the gunwale. She remained so long in this position that I assured her again of her safety, and suggested that she would be more comfortable in her seat.

"Take me to the ship, if you please, Mr. Dahlgren," she replied, so haughtily that I caught my breath. When we were within sight of the deck, however, she picked up her rifle and took her place by my side. At the ladder she passed by my offered hand and without aid scrambled to the deck.

During the rest of the hunt there was little conversation in our boat. The walrus suffered, however. When we returned to the ship the sun was high. The other boats hung at the davits, but except the man on

Laughter of the Sphinx

watch no one hailed us. The rest of the party was asleep.

At the head of the ladder, however, stood Mrs. Tremont. Her hair was stringy, and beneath her eyes were dark shadows. She stood looking out to sea until Billy and I had reached the deck.

"I need hardly ask you," she said, in low tones, "not to relate this experience to the other members of the party."

Billy merely bowed and tramped away, but I was sorry for her.

"Of course not," I said. "It was perfectly natural. You may count on Dr. Parsons and me, and I'll speak to the men."

"Thank you," she answered, coldly. "I will speak to them myself."

I bowed myself away, and she waited, while we hauled up the boat. When I went to my bunk I saw her giving something to the two sailors, who were scraping and touching their caps.

IV.

"Damn a nail!" remarked Devoe, with his thumb in his mouth.

An Arctic Problem

"Oh!" sympathized Mrs. Tremont. "Did it hurt you? Come right down and let me tie it up."

She scrambled along a rafter of our half-finished Arctic house and slowly descended the ladder. Devoe glanced sullenly toward the half-dozen of us amateur carpenters who were roofing over the headquarters.

"Better have it 'tended to," said Bunker. "A smashed thumb is no joke."

Devoe's face brightened. "Guess I had," he said. "I'll be back in a minute."

"What do you coddle him for?" asked one of the fellows, when the two were well down toward the beach. "Most of us have a finger or two out of commission."

"Couldn't stand the chatter," replied the hunter. "They talked faster 'n they worked. 'Sides look at this plank!"

The end was dented and splintered by awkward blows.

"Why on airth she come at all, an' why on airth, if she hed to come, she shud wear boys' clothes and try to drive a nail is more'n I know," said the wizened young hunter. "Look at 'er swingin' down there with thet

Laughter of the Sphinx

poor seed uv a half-breed. I'll bet my stock o' tobaccy thet she won't do no wrappin' up uv his sore finger. She'll jest ax Mrs. Van Den Zee whar the liniment is, an' Mrs. Van 'll dew the work. Now, thar's a woman fer ye!"

"Yes," assented Livingston, a young geologist fresh from a technical school. "She's a charming women. But what's the use of a woman here, anyway? Look how haggard the boss got when she was seasick on the voyage up! He has enough to 'tend to without worrying over his wife. When the time comes for the long sledge-trip, she'll cry; or, if she doesn't, she'll be brave and he'll think of her the more and want to come back to her all the while. As far as I can see she is pure peril to us, and no use at all."

"All the same," returned the hunter, "I notice thet you was glad to hev her sew up the breeches you ripped, slidin' down the backstay. An' I noticed thet in the walrus hunt, when you emptied your gun an' the walrus was still chargin' the boat, you wuz tickled to find yer spare weppun loaded fur ye. I ain't ashamed to confess thet I was

An Arctic Problem

relieved to have seventeen shot ready. I don't want to come arter the North Pole an' turn up my toes on th' way in any little walrus fight."

"That's not the point," replied the geologist. "A man can sew and a man could have loaded our guns. It didn't need a woman to do it."

"It didn't, hay?" roared Bunker. "Wa-al, now, I wanter know what man *would* er done it. A man would er wanted ter shoot. Besides ther's a moral effect about a woman. You fellers in the East don't val'e women as yer ought. We know what a good woman is out West. I've seen a hull town er thieves an' gamblers an' murderers tarned into law-abidin' citizens by one gal comin' ter the place."

"Hello!" interrupted a cheerful voice from below. "Is there anyone up there that needs to be healed up? We're organizing a hospital corps."

"Didn't I tell ye?" murmured Bunker, "Thank ye, ma'am; I've split my finger, an' if you've got anythin' coolin' I'll have some put on."

Laughter of the Spahr

Most of us had banged ourselves more or less, and, say what you will about coddling, most of us were more comfortable after our fingers had been dressed. Not a word of sympathy did we get from Mrs. Van, only bright smiles and bright words.

Mrs. Tremont did not climb again to the roof. Billy was detailed to work there, and him she avoided even more carefully than she avoided me. In our story of the walrus hunt he had assigned the big bull to her gun—for indeed, we had found her ball beneath the tough skin of the brute's neck. I think she believed that he was enjoying a sarcasm at her expense—though that was never in Billy's mind. At all events, she kept away from us, and was chiefly with Devoe, who plumed himself visibly on her preference.

By the time the house was finished, however, she had regained all her usual self-possession.

"I am chief decorator," she announced, "and you are all under my orders. We are going to have an Arctic palace. Now, Mr. Van Den Zee, don't look glum. Your old explorations can wait a day until I have finished.

An Arctic Problem

I don't want to live, and you don't either, in a room hung with red flannel. It may keep out the cold, but it doesn't look pretty. Our three rooms are going to blossom as the rose."

"Very well," returned Van, "but if some one doesn't go to shoot reindeer what will you have to eat in winter?"

"Oh, reindeer! How I shall like to eat reindeer!" she exclaimed. "Yes, hurry and send some one away. Send my husband; he is a good shot. But you must leave me enough men to decorate properly."

"Very well," consented Van. "Dahl, will you and Devoe and Bunker be ready to start to-morrow?"

"I can't have Mr. Devoe go," broke in Mrs. Tremont. "His taste is so good! I need him here."

Van's lips drew out into a thin line. "I'm afraid you'll have to get along without him," he said. "I'm sorry."

Nevertheless, after two hours of climbing up the cliffs behind the house, Devoe complained of his eyes. He had no snow glasses and was afraid of going blind. Disgusted

Laughter of the Sphinx

with his malingering, I sent him back to headquarters. Before nightfall the doctor joined us.

We hunted with success for three days, and returned each laden with haunches of venison. Billy met us half way up the hill and lingered behind the others with me for a talk.

"All gone well?" I asked.

Billy shrugged his big shoulders.

"We're living in a Turkish palace," he said, "all carpets and cushions. You ought to see the Eskimos stare. They are not allowed to enter, for obvious reasons, and I feel as if I ought to dress for dinner. But it isn't that I wanted to talk about. I'm afraid that little Tremont woman is going to make trouble."

"What's the matter?" I asked, hastily, for Billy was dragging at his whiskers.

"Well, in the first place, she's turning the heads of the youngsters. The little Livingston and Devoe are not on speaking terms, and yesterday Devoe struck one of the Huskies and almost frightened the whole settlement away."

"A Husky!" I exclaimed. "For goodness'

An Arctic Problem

sake leave your old billy-goat whiskers alone and tell me a straight story."

"Well," began Billy, "when you friend Devoe came back I saw him exchanging looks with Mrs. Tremont. He said his eyes had given out, but he wouldn't let the doctor see them, and Mrs. Tremont mopped them with witch-hazel—the first bit of actual work I've seen her do. They got well soon enough to let him unpack a big box for her, and out came the carpets and mirrors and pictures.

"She climbed upon the old deal-table and ordered the things brought in.

"'But, Mrs. Tremont,' said Van, 'you don't want to put down that Axminster rug on this floor. It'll be soaked with seal-oil and—the Eskimos 'll sit on it.'

"'Seal-oil!' she screamed. 'You're not going to have seal-oil in here. This is the dining-room. Seal-oil in the men's quarters, if you like, but none passes this door.'

"'I'm afraid,' said Van—you know that he sets his lips when he is waked up—that we shall have to use this room for all sorts of things. Your carpet will certainly be a mess.'

Laughter of the Sphinx

"Her eyes blazed; she's got a temper, that woman, as we know.

"'All right; let it, then,' she said. 'We're going to have the rug,' and down it went. She was very wroth, though; she followed me out of doors, when I went to bring some of the mirrors, and began to abuse Van for not caring for the comfort of his men."

"The devil she did!" I grunted.

"'But I'll have my way,' she said. 'You saw how I had it about keeping Devoe. I know how to manage your Mr. Van.'"

"Has the ship gone?" I asked.

"Left two hours after you did. We can't send her home. We shall just have to manage her. Now, listen; that isn't all. She made big eyes at Livingston till he trotted around after her like a little dog. That riled Devoe. The thing came to a climax when she asked advice about placing a big mirror; should it be opposite the entrance or at one side, where it reflected the men's room? Livingston said on the wall side; then, of course, Devoe took the other view. However, she favored the youngster. Devoe turned red and came outside for more stuff.

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An Arctic Problem

Livingston came, too, and both of them grabbed the same roll of tapestry at the same time. I haven't a sense of humor, you tell me, but I found this funny. Livingston said, 'This is my charge.' Devoe said, 'Fergit it and take another'; but Livingston wouldn't let go and they began to struggle for it. I put an end to that by taking the thing myself. They were ashamed, I think, for they didn't fight any more. Meanwhile Van was having a confab with Mrs. Van, and by and by called Livingston and went away in the whale-boat, across to Netchiuloome."

"What did Mrs. Van do?" I asked.

"Oh, she's been a brick all through. Cooked us good grub and never said a word. She helped with the decoration, too, and I saw her smoothing out Devoe's temper after the fight. And then——"

"What about the Husky?" I interrupted.

"I was coming to that," said Billy. "Van came back from Netchiuloome this morning with a boatload of Eskimos and their families. Mrs. Tremont screamed with joy. Telekoteah—big Telekoteah, you know—was in the crowd, and nothing would do but he must

Laughter of the Spbinn

stand and lean on his harpoon while she painted his picture. I heard her tell Devoe that the Husky was the handsomest man she ever saw, and he chafed and glowered at Telekoteah more than he had glowered at Livingston. She went all over him, praising his hands and his hair and his eyes; and she wanted him to take off his *netcha*, so that she could get his shoulders. I had to interpret for her, and I thought she'd be out of mischief if she were out of headquarters, so I promised Telekoteah a stick of wood if he would pose for her, and she got out her easel and went to work. That was all right for a while. But pretty soon Devoe said he had left his hammer down on the beach and went to fetch it. I saw him pushing the Husky around, and then I heard the whack a man's fist makes against another man's cheek, and there lay the Husky on the ground with Devoe standing over him. I ran down the beach and took hold of Devoe, and Telekoteah ran away. Mrs. Tremont was laughing so that she could hardly speak.

"'It's all right, Mr. Parsons,' she said, 'let him go. He was trying to get the Es-

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kimo into the pose I wanted, and the man resisted."

"Go on," I said, "I'm too much stunned now to be surprised at anything. What did Van do?"

Billy's hand went to his whiskers.

"I have never seen such a face on any man as his was," replied Billy. "It was white hot. But he didn't say anything before us. He beckoned Devoe to follow him away from the rest and talked to him, and the half-breed went to pieces as if some one were slashing him with a dog-whip. By and by Van left him and walked over toward the Huskies, who were packing up their tents. When he came near them the women ran away and the men collected in a bunch and looked sullen. Van argued with them for an hour, and then came marching up the beach looking straight before him, and the Huskies went on with their packing.

"Pretty soon I saw Mrs. Van walking quietly toward them. She had her Winchester rifle in her hand. The Huskies stared at her as if she were a ghost—they hadn't seen her before, and her yellow hair was a new

Laughter of the Sphinx

thing to them. She began to talk to the women first, and in a minute or two had them laughing. Van tells me she has been practising Eskimo with him for the last six months. Then she went to the men. I don't know what she said, but she gave Telekoteah the gun, and when she came away they began to put up their tents again. By Jupiter! but I was glad to see that. The story would have got about the whole tribe, and not a Husky should we have had to help us. Think of running your own errands and carrying home all your game. Van shook her by the hand, and then we all shook her by the hand, and the air would have been sickening sweet if she hadn't laughed at us and asked if we didn't want to help her get dinner. And we had a first-class repast, which you missed."

"Well, I don't know that I'm sorry," I said. "You must have been a party of spooks."

"Not at all. We had all the joy of the sinner that repenteth. The little fight had glorified the atmosphere. We laughed like children."

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"You are a crowd of weathercocks," I said. "Is the love-feast going to last?"

"That's what I want to talk about. It's got to last. I think Devoe is quelled for a time, but the lady will bear watching."

"Behold the butterfly-hunter at his calling!" I scoffed.

"Yes," returned Billy. "It's a poor law that restricts the use of chloroform."

Nevertheless, at headquarters I found little to bear out Billy in his fears. On the contrary, the outbreak seemed to have shocked the nonsense out of every one. Devoe was as meek and eager to please as a recently corrected child.

Mrs. Tremont ate her dinner in silence, and afterwards, when we were lounging over our coffee in the luxurious, lamplit room, she appeared, smiling brightly, with a box of Turkish tobacco.

"Put this in your pipes," she laughed triumphantly. "I'm going to smoke with you."

It was excellent, even to Billy, whose hardened lungs scorned anything milder than plug.

Laughter of the Sphinx

She brought a guitar, too, and tinkled out popular songs to order until everyone marvelled at her memory. At the end of the evening we turned in, harmonious and delighted with her brilliancy. Mrs. Van's exploits in the afternoon passed into the shade.

Once in every twenty-four hours thereafter we gathered in the dining-room to enjoy some such entertainment. At first some of the men grumbled at the sumptuousness of carpets and tapestry. Billy growled that he "never felt like going to meals without washing his hands." But at last the belief came to be commonly accepted that the little formalities of civilization kept up one's self-respect.

"There's a big difference, Dahl, between this sort of thing and our life on the other expeditions," said Billy, one night. "Do you remember how we used to argue? No man could set up a theory on any subject without running the gauntlet. Nowadays you never hear a loud word; the fellows are afraid of shocking a lady."

"Yas," drawled Bunker. "I've noticed

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that a man don't fight so easy w'en he's got his hair combed. By the way, whar wuz those fellers that ust ter kick at ladies comin' ter th' Arctic regions? I ain't heard nothin' from 'em fur ever so long."

"Where are you that used to be wondering what a woman wanted to wear trousers and smoke cigarettes for?" retorted Livingston. "You seem to be as fond of Mrs. Tremont as any of us."

Bunker grinned sheepishly.

"Somehow she looks different in them seal an' reindeer skins," he said. "I seen her yesterday down at the Huskies' *igloo-gahs*. She was rigged out in full Husky costume, an' the men was standin' round her jest like civilized dudes. She looked awful pretty."

"She is a very brilliant woman," said Livingston, sententiously.

"It's Mrs. Van that does the cooking, though," I suggested.

"Yes, isn't she a corker?" put in Devoe.

Since his misstep Devoe had made it a point to agree with every last speaker. He

Laughter of the Sphinx

had not enough self-control to be silent, but he never ventured to make heterodox opinions, and we took him very lightly.

"I should have thought," said Livingston, "that you found Mrs. Tremont more of a—more agreeable. You have enough of her society."

As meteorologist, Devoe had but one duty: to read his instruments every two hours, at other times he was Mrs. Tremont's guard of honor on the rather risky adventures she liked to undertake. I thought she was trying to re-establish her reputation for bravery with Billy and me.

Of her husband she never seemed to think. He took her expeditions uninterestedly, as he took everything else, except his study of Eskimo ailments—he had none to study among our party.

"I suppose he is used to her," commented Billy, one afternoon, late in the winter, as we were cutting ice for drinking water from a berg frozen in the bay, abreast of the headquarters, "but it seems to me that I shouldn't like to have my wife climbing vertical cliffs by moonlight with only a half-breed to help

An Arctic Problem

her if she should slip. Why do you suppose she does it?"

"Wants to be a man like ourselves, I think," I said. "She would like to go north upon the sledge journey. I overheard her asking Van a day or two ago whether he didn't think a woman could stand snow-shoe trips as well as a man."

"So-o!" grunted Billy. "Well, then, that may explain why she has been making up to Van so hard of late. I thought—what did Van do?"

"Laughed and said that but for the short rations perhaps she could. She understood, and I don't believe she liked it. What a couple of gossips we are, Billy! But it's for the good of the party, so I suppose we had better talk matters over. What was it you thought?"

"I was afraid," answered Billy, "that she was trying to make Mrs. Van uncomfortable."

"That idea entered my head," I agreed, and for a moment we pondered it over.

"This is how it seems to me," I explained. "Mrs. Tremont is the kind of woman who runs her set by virtue of the astonishing

Laughter of the Sphinx

things she has done. When you and I were young and mixed in the great world, the female who did freak things for the sake of describing them to an amazed circle of friends was just evolving in America. Within a few years she has taken the lead—so I am told. She likes to be the central figure, no matter where she is, and there are so many of her that each has to fight for place. She is used to fighting; she gets to regarding it as a necessity. Now, here is this woman, who has always been cock of her roost. She bosses her husband, and I have no doubt bosses her friends. She expected to boss us. In that scrap with the Huskies Mrs. Van took the wind out of her sails. Mrs. Tremont has been laying herself out to eclipse her, and now that she isn't succeeding she is getting desperate and means to make trouble. See?"

"Yes," answered Billy, drily, "I see. Suppose, however, that you come down to present conditions. What are we going to do about it?"

"Leave it to Providence and Mrs. Van," I suggested.

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An Arctic Problem

"Providence, I surmise, doesn't govern north of Upernavik. We might leave it to Turng-nur-och-suah, or whatever his name is, but I doubt whether he understands the ways of civilized women. Why can't creatures of light and luxury be as simple and straightforward as these poor savage females. They seem to have all the virtues and none of the vices of civilization."

"Huh!" I suggested. "I'll bet that if we could get at the inside workings of the tribe we should find that every woman wants to be the wife of a medicine-man."

We were passing the tide-gauge as I spoke, and from behind the little mound of snow that we had heaved up, in keeping the ice clear, came a woman's voice. The woman was Mrs. Tremont, and she was holding a loud and passionate monologue.

"I tell you," she exclaimed, "that Van Den Zee is no leader of men. I could manage an expedition better myself. The idea of his mooning in his cabin with that colorless wife of his, and making his men build sledges. I would have had every sledge put together at home and by this time I would

Laughter of the Sphinx

have travelled to the North Pole. Any man in the party could do it better; you would be a far better leader yourself."

"You've made a bull's-eye there," said the thin voice of Devoe. "It's all rot to say that sledge-making keeps the men from scrapping."

"Of course it is. I'd have kept them from quarrelling—I *have* kept them from it. If I hadn't been here they'd have turned Mr. and Mrs. Van Den Zee out of doors before this. That woman with her dovey manners makes my——"

Here Billy began to whistle a tune, and the voice ceased. We made our way vigorously to the house. While we were unloading our ice into the melting apparatus, Billy broke the silence.

"Dahl," he said, "we must warn Van."

"*Peeook*," I assented.

The dining-room was empty, but from the chief's cabin came the crooning of a little Eskimo charm-song. We had heard the *angekok* call spirits with it over and again, and always we had derided the musical ear

An Arctic Problem

of the Eskimo gods, but now both of us stood listening until the strain ended.

"Great heavens, she can sing!" I exclaimed. "She can sing ten times as well as the other one. Curious dramatic effect, isn't it, that she should be so happy while that cat is making enemies for her out in the dark."

Billy made no answer, but strode to the door and knocked. Mrs. Van opened it. Her face had grown more fragile as the winter night wore upon it, and when she saw our serious faces it turned paler and frailer still. She pressed her finger hastily to her lip, glanced over her shoulder into the cabin, came out and softly closed the door.

"There is some trouble," she murmured. "Please don't tell my husband. He has enough on his mind now."

Billy meditated, frowning.

"Listen," she said. "I wish you would trust to me, and—and I am sure I can trust you. Is there any bad feeling among the—members of the party?"

Billy heaved a long breath.

Laughter of the Sphinx

"You are a brave woman," he said. "Yes, there is. It isn't serious yet, but we must be ready for anything that may come up. You had better sit here by the table."

She rested her forehead upon a slender hand, while Billy told her plainly what we had heard. Before he had finished, her face was wet, but no sob interrupted Billy's story. I knew at that moment why an explorer is willing to give up his dreams of adding new lands to the map for the sake of a woman.

When she looked up her eyes smiled bravely through her tears.

"Please don't think I'm going to be afraid," she said. "I have known for some time that Mrs. Tremont did not feel pleasantly toward us. It is not sorrow that makes me cry, it is relief at finding two strong friends. I have felt rather lonely and distrustful. I suppose it is the darkness. Now let us see what to do. Do you think there is any chance that she can make the men believe ill of us?"

"She won't do much with Bunker," answered Billy. "But the other fellows are young men and there is no doubt she has rather dazzled them."

An Arctic Problem

"I suppose," said Mrs. Van, "that I ought to have been more entertaining, but I thought Mrs. Tremont was doing that part of the work very well and that I had better devote myself to the cooking-stove."

"Men get to taking ordinary comforts in an ordinary way," philosophized Billy. "But it's not too late."

"Your part is to keep on as you have begun. Something will turn up to show the men. Leave it to us. If we need you we will call upon you."

"Very well," she answered. "I shall be ready. My courage failed a little when I felt lonely, but now that I have friends I am brave again."

She gave a smile and a hand to each of us. I think my grasp must have caused her pain, but she made no sign of it. For a moment we stood thus linked, she pondering and we looking at her. Presently, at a movement in the tiny stateroom she hurried away, and we heard her crooning the magic song. For a moment we listened, and then, with a common impulse, we grasped each other by the hand.

Laughter of the Sphinx

V.

That evening Mrs. Tremont was first at dinner. I thought her glances rested suspiciously upon me, but they flitted away whenever I tried to catch them. Devoe, however, openly watched us, and his nose twitched harder than ever.

Mrs. Tremont's voice startled me as I was taking note of his troubled looks.

"Mr. Dahlgren," it said, "will you pass me the sugar?"

Now, by the carelessness of those aboard the ship, part of our supply of sugar had not been landed. Consequently in that one article of diet Van had put us on rations. Mrs. Tremont had used her share for the dinner, and I had used mine. At a tiny nod from Mrs. Van, however, I sent the almost empty bowl to the doctor's wife. She took it sharply, as if my compliance had displeased her, hesitated a moment, and then pushed the bowl away.

"No," she said, "I suppose one can't take any more. Oh, how I should like to have all the sugar I wanted, just once. I don't sup-

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pose any one is to blame—but it is particularly exasperating that sugar should be the one thing short in our supplies. Just think of the comfort we might have had in it. I could have cooked you such beautiful cakes—cake is the only thing I know how to make,” she added, hastily, “but mine are held to be delicious. I wish some good Arctic spirit would give me a birthday present of a bowl of sugar—my birthday comes in a fortnight from to-night, and I have lots of surprises for you. But a cake you cannot have.”

A curious reply came to her wish. Before she had well finished speaking, some one knocked upon the door. I opened it. Several Eskimos clustered about the threshold. Among them was a hunter from Cape York, the most southerly settlement of the tribe. He bore a letter gravely into the room and laid it before Van.

A letter out of a region where there is no written language is a startling affair. We waited, silent, while Van tore it open. But he read it with a twinkle in his eye, which was equivalent with Van to a broad smile.

“It seems,” he said, “that the ship got

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caught. There is no danger. The captain writes me that he met heavy ice in Melville Bay and not daring to try the passage so late in the season, returned to the north water and put in at North Star Bay. He is not heavily frozen up, and hopes to be afloat, safe, before July. 'All well aboard thus far,' read Van, meditatively, and sat pondering while we chatted over the news.

After dinner he called me aside.

"Dahl," he said, "men on shipboard in the ice are more apt to develop scurvy than men ashore. I shall send the doctor to look over the crew, and, of course, he can't go alone. Are you willing to try two weeks of sledging? The sun will come back next week; it won't be night work."

"Night or day, old man, it's all the same to me, if you wish it," I said. I am not given to bursts of effusion, and this one seemed to surprise Van a little. All he said, however, was:

"Thank you, Dahl; I'm sure of it. By the way," he added, and his eyes twinkled, "you might bring back some sugar for Mrs. Tremont."

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Just a fortnight afterward, after an easy trip, we arrived at the headquarters. The conscientious doctor had dropped off at the Eskimo *iglooyas* to visit a patient. I paused in the outer passage to knock the snow out of my clothes. The door of the men's room was open, and I was aware that the party was gathered there. I heard Devoe's snarling voice in what seemed to be a speech. Bunker I could see. He was standing with his hand upon the table; the queer wrinkles about his eyes were contracted and his mouth and nose were screwed up sidewise. I drew near the door.

"And so we have determined," concluded Devoe, pompously, "to depose Van Den Zee from the command of this expedition, and we offer you the position of leader."

Bunker's glance wandered from one corner of the ceiling to another.

"It don't seem to me," he drawled, "'s if they was any call to change leaders. I do' know 's I cud dew any better'n Mister Van Den Zee."

"But you could," broke in Mrs. Tremont, impetuously. "Listen. It is not fit that a

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married man should have charge of an Arctic expedition. See what Mr. Van Den Zee has done. Instead of working at the beginning, he went away to visit Eskimos and left you men to build the house. When you had comfortable quarters, he set you to building sledges, while he spent all his time shut up in his state-room with his wife. Did he build a single sledge? Not one. He takes no care of his men; he thinks of nothing except his wife. But for his carelessness we should have had a comfortable winter; as it is we lack an essential item in our supplies. Now he has sent two men on a senseless sledge-trip in the stormy season. The chances are against their ever being seen again. One of them is my husband, and I feel bound to make a protest."

"Wa'al, I'm sorry you feel thet way," drawled Bunker. "An' I'm obliged tew ye all fur thinkin' o' me as leader, but I guess I'll decline. I hain't no fault t' find 'th Van Den Zee."

"Very well," said Mrs. Tremont, "there are others who will be glad to accept. It was against my advice that you were selected,

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anyway. We can find some one who will provide us with proper food and not send out men to their deaths in the winter."

I stepped inside the door.

"You look as if you were holding council," I said. "Mrs. Tremont, this is your birthday, isn't it? The Arctic spirits have sent you a bag of sugar."

While I was speaking I glanced about the room. Most of the younger men, the first-year fellows, were sitting around the table. One or two, with their chins upon their fists, seemed to be undecided; the others, apparently, had been whispering, for they were poised with their heads together looking at me in surprise. Behind them stood Mrs. Tremont.

Upon the table lay a sheet of foolscap paper. I picked it up. Upon it was the short arraignment of Van's incompetency that Devoe had just been declaiming. The blood tingled in my finger-tips.

"You are a nice crowd of fools!" I broke out. "Listen while I tell you a few things. Is there any one of you who fancies that he can manage an expedition like this? You

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have passed part of one year in the Arctic regions ; not one of you can manage a team of dogs. What would you do upon a sledge-trip over the inland ice, where for two months you would see nothing but blank desert ? Do you think that because you have read Nansen and Kane and Hayes you can manage such a trip ? Just try it. I have spent three seasons here, and I don't consider myself competent to lead the sledge-party, nor to carry ten men through an Arctic winter in comfort. Is there any of you that thinks he can keep this crowd together even for the next month—for I'll tell you that you'll not get Billy or me to try it any more than you have been able to persuade Bunker. You'll be drawing pistols on each other in two days. And, by the way, is there any one of you that wants to tell Frank Van Den Zee that he is displaced—a man who can crumple up this miserable little half-breed with ten words."

"Who's a half-breed?" cried Devoe, and levelled a revolver straight at my face.

Mrs. Tremont screamed, the men sprang to their feet. Bunker leaned over and seized

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the pistol with one hand. With the other he lifted Devoe by the collar over the back of his chair. Two or three of the men closed in to help him, and in a minute the meteorologist, bound with a piece of *sinnicksher*, lay helpless in his bunk.

"That settles it for me," gasped Livingston, who had been the first to lend a hand. "I'll have no more to do with mutinies."

"I'm with you," said another man.

"Let me say one more word," said I.

"What would they say at home about Arctic heroes that changed leaders because the first one didn't give them sugar enough?"

Silence followed this speech, and those men who seemed still hesitating stared uneasily about.

Billy came in from out of doors, but at a sign from me, stood quiet. I wanted to give the men more time to be ashamed.

In the hush I began to be aware of Mrs. Van's Eskimo charm-song in the dining-room. It was more audible than usual; I suppose she had raised her voice to overcome the tumult we had made. Her voice was one of those contraltos that make men

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clear their throats. The door was open, and in the great mirror was reflected the table, which was partly laid for our dinner. As she sang she passed swiftly to and fro with plates and napkins. I could but admire her self-control; she must have known that a crisis had come.

Billy turned to the men.

"That's what she has been doing," he said, "looking out for your comfort while you, I judge, have been making fools of yourselves."

No one answered. Even Mrs. Tremont was quiet. The doctor entered, looked surprised, and stood for a moment by my side. I must have dropped the arraignment of Van, and the careful doctor must have picked it up, for in a moment he held it out toward his wife.

"Lily," he exclaimed, sternly, "this is your doing!"

There was a movement of surprise among us.

"I will have no more of it," he went on. "Go to your cabin and pack up your clothes. You are going to the ship with me to-morrow morning."

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Mrs. Tremont roused herself and faced him.

"What do you mean?" she exclaimed. "Have you lost your senses? Go nurse your sick Eskimos and don't meddle with things you don't understand."

"I understand," replied the doctor, quietly. "I am going to pay more attention to your exploits after this."

"You have lost your wits," she repeated, but there was a tremor in her voice. She glanced appealingly about the room, but I don't think any one looked at her.

"Shall I go with you?" asked the doctor. He advanced, as if to take her hand, but she snatched it away, burst into tears, and sped hastily out of the room. Her husband followed to the dining-room and entered Van's cabin. In a moment Van came in. He was twisting the paper in his fingers, and as he approached the table he tossed it carelessly upon the floor.

His face was stern as he surveyed the members of his party, most of whom were as crestfallen as schoolboys caught in a lie. He spoke lightly, however.

"You had better untie Mr. Devoe," he

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said. "I want to consult you all upon a question of policy."

Two or three of the men sprang eagerly to obey the command.

With eyes downcast, Devoe took his seat.

"I am not going to say anything about this matter," said Van. "I knew it was coming, and I know it is over. I do not blame you, understand that." He paused and cleared his throat.

"We were damned fools," whispered little Livingston.

"What I wanted to consult you about is this," resumed Van. "Mrs. Tremont, the doctor tells me, is going to the ship to-morrow. It is a little difficult for me to say this, but Mrs. Van Den Zee is doubtful whether any woman is not out of place in an Arctic headquarters. She has begged me to ask you frankly whether you would not do better if she should go too."

"By thunder," put in Bunker, "ef she goes, I'll resign an' go too."

"So will I," shouted Livingston. The others replied only by a murmur. I don't think many of them dared to trust their voices.

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"Let's communicate with the lady herself," suggested Bunker, with the true Westerner's love of a scene. He left the room and returned leading Mrs. Van by the hand. She was trying to smile, but her face was wet with tears.

At sight of her every one sprang to his feet.

"Hooray for Mrs. Van!" shouted Bunker, and the cheers brought the Eskimos out of their huts a quarter of a mile down the beach. It must have been discord in Mrs. Tremont's ears.

VI.

Six weeks afterward, of a bright morning, five members of the expedition stood a few hundred feet below the door of our headquarters. Each one of us was warm in new furs and each carried an Eskimo dog-whip. Our sledge, loaded with supplies, and our dog-teams, under the charge of Eskimos, were waiting for us fifteen miles away at the summit of the cliffs. In ten minutes we should be off upon our sledge-journey across the snow desert to the north of Greenland—

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perhaps, if the conditions should be favorable, further yet; who could say?

We waited only for Van, who was bidding his farewells in secret.

"Hope she'll come out, tew," said Bunker. "I should like to have a glimpse o' them eyes ter die with in case we don't come back."

She did come. She followed Van to the door and waved her hand to us.

"The Pole!" she cried. "Don't fail."

Van strode down the slope and passed us without a word. His eyes were lifted toward the snow-clad summits, where the desert path that against hope we hoped to follow began. There was no trace of doubt upon his face, but such an illumination of resolve as I have never seen in another countenance. With one accord, as if we had been drawn by some physical force, we closed in after him.

TOM'S VINDICATION

OUR entomologist joined us at St. John's. At once we knew that he was no man for an Arctic expedition. He had thin shoulders and great blue eyes, bulging vacantly at you behind gold-rimmed spectacles. His name was Tom, but we soon began to call him Sister, because he couldn't pull an oar for five miles at a time—a very trifling distance in a region where boat journeys of fifty, a hundred, two hundred miles are matters of course—and because he wouldn't hunt walrus. He said he couldn't understand the exhilaration we used to feel in the hand-to-tusk fights with the brutes.

"What is the use of my shooting them?" he used to ask, in his mild voice. "There are enough of you to kill all the specimens we need. I would rather complete my own collection of insects"—and, indeed, it was a marvellous collection.

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"The truth is, I fear, Sister," remarked our best hunter—we called him Nimrod—"that you are afraid of the walrus. You think they would take you for a clam and eat you."

To this clumsy rudeness Tom responded only with a mild "perhaps." He showed so little spirit that even those of us who ought to have known better shrugged our shoulders over what came to be called Tom's "retiring nature."

The funny incident that undeceived us as to Tom's character, and won back for him the name his parents had given, did not occur until late in the life of the expedition. The great leader and his single brave companion had returned from their wonderful sledge journey over thirteen hundred miles of trackless snow desert to the furthest point north upon the east coast of Greenland ever seen by man. We in the ship had picked them up at their headquarters, had completed our scientific observations, and had left behind in the north the beloved land of red cliffs, blue icebergs, white snows, and our dear, brown friends, the Eskimos. Our last observation was taken, our last record was entered. We

Tom's Vindication

had nothing to do but loaf about the deck and tell stories. It was a delightful, lazy life. Perhaps the leader in his state-room was tortured with anticipations of his approaching fame, but as for us on deck, we were full of the delights of the sea and of the night—now descending upon us for the first time in two months—and the moonlight, and I do not think any of us would have protested against sailing on in peacefulness and irresponsibility forever.

Sometimes we stretched ourselves upon the coils of rope lying about the fore-castle deck, and talked about home and good dinners; again we climbed down the steep ladder into the fore-castle to exchange songs and yarns with the crew. There was an iron stove in the fore-castle; the funnel lifted itself about three feet above the deck, forward. The stove was convenient for preparing foods foraged surreptitiously out of the steward's pantry. Among the left-over supplies was plenty of chocolate, and the hogshead of molasses in the dark forehold was but half empty. The obvious thing to cook was chocolate caramels.

Laughter of the Sphinx

One night a dozen of us, members of the expedition and members of the ship's company, were lounging on the chests, or stowed in the bunks, enjoying the warmth of the fire—by no means unpleasant in the cool September air. Upon the stove was set a kettle containing half a gallon of molasses, condensed milk, sugar, and chocolate, certain to candy into the best stuff ever supplied to an Arctic expedition. Tom, the only member of our party who was not lazy where petty services were needed—as for important services, such as saving your life, they are paid from one member of an Arctic expedition to another as a matter of course—Tom was permitted to stir the candy. In reality it needed little attention; the old ship was rolling regularly, starboard side up, port side up, starboard up, port up, with a motion as easy as that of a hammock; just enough to keep the brown liquid swashing about, but not enough to spill the kettle from the stove.

The mate was paying one of his rare visits to the forecastle. We always rejoiced when he joined us, for he was the best yarn-spinner on board. He seated as much of himself as

Tom's Vindication

the narrow board would hold upon a step of the steep fore-castle ladder, regarded the assemblage through his pipe smoke, and grinned.

"Hain't seen s' many folks in here," he drawled, "sense away larst Feb'uary. 'N then," he added, "they didn't stay long."

The fireman from his bunk roared out a great "Haw! haw!" but abashed, cut it off short. Our ears pricked up.

"Why not, Mr. Moffat?" inquired Nimrod, eagerly. "Tell us why they didn't stay long."

"Guess 'twas 'cause they were skeered. 'Tain't many folks that w'u'dn't 'a' be'n, with Winchest'r bullets a-flyin' 'bout ther ears. An' they desarved et tew," added the old sea-dog, grimly.

He beat the bowl of his pipe with a hollow sound against his palm until the ashes were all fallen out, whereupon he felt for his tobacco and knife. Perceiving that he would stay long enough to tell the story, we arranged ourselves comfortably. Nimrod and our most agile member, nicknamed the "Monkey," supported each other back to back, seated upon a sea-chest. In the recesses of the

Laughter of the Sphinx

bunk I had appropriated I found a sailor's jacket, which I doubled over the edge of the bunk as a pillow.

"Ye needn't git red dy t' go t' sleep," drawled the mate. "'Tain't a long story. Et's only 'bout our larst sealin' trip in the spring. Ye see, this ship in the spring she duz some real work—not like takin' you fellers on yer skylarkin trips a'ter the no'th pole. In Feb'uary she starts on her sealin' v'y'ge. The seals, ye know, comes t' th' ice-fields off Labrador to hev ther young. They lies over th' ice-field ez thick ez th' fingers on yer hand, an' we knocks 'em on th' heads 'th sticks, an' skins 'em, an' hauls the skins aboard. It takes a big crew. We had a hundred extra men on this little vessel larst year, an' we got ten thousan' skins.

"The extra han's was a set er toughs from Labrador. We warn't five days out o' St. John's afore they owned th' hull ship. They was a hard gang, take 'em all together, an' they was most of 'em crazy. They had one or two fights about gittin' the best places t' swing ther hammocks down b'low in th' hold, an' at larst some on 'em made a rush on th'

Tom's Vindication

fo'k'sle, an' routed out the reg'lar crew an' tuk ther bunks. All except me. I wuz sleepin' for'ard that trip, an' they didn't dar' t' clear me out. I hed that bunk yonder that you've got, y'ungster."

I nodded sympathetically. Moffat puffed out several little cones of smoke in silence, and his eyes began to twinkle.

"Ther wuz a gre't big feller 'th a bald he'd that wuz a sort uv ringleader tew th' gang," he resumed, presently. "He 'n' another man hed th' bunk opp'site, an' he crowded th' other in 'gainst th' sides uv her, an' tuk th' outside himself. Ther wuzn't room f'r all uv him; sometimes his boots stuck out, but mostly 'twas 'is he'd thet hung inter th' fo'k'sle, with th' bald forud shinin' like a egg. Waal, he ust t' be allers pushin' th' men on t' fight, an' they was mostly ready, so f'r a while the fo'k'sle wuzn't no place f'r sleepin'.

"Fin'ly, one night I come down, beat out 'th workin' short-handed in a no'theast storm—'cause these fellers didn't do no work about th' ship; they wuz hired to kill seals. I turned in, an' jest ez I wuz havin' a wink o' sleep ther come the biggest row—hollerin'

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an' wranglin'. I turned over, an' ther wuz this old feller eggin' two kids on t' rastle on th' chests. I wuz mad.

"Shet up, will ye! I hollered, but the feller didn't take no notice, so I gropes aroun' till I found a ca'tridge, an' I wrenched out the bullet, an' loads th' Winchester, an' shewts acrost the fo'k'sle with th' wad."

For all the excitement in the mate's voice he might have been telling a duck-shooting story. We measured with our eyes the ten feet or so from bunk to bunk, and some one said:

"Gee whittaker!"

"Tuk him 'th th' wad squar on th' forud," went on the mate, "an' he thought he wuz kilt. Cats, how he did roar, an' flopped out uv th' bunk an' on deck, with th' rest arter 'im! They wuz skairt tew.

"I never seen what happened on deck, 'cause I tarned over an' went t' sleep; but I hear tell as he wuz ravin' w'en he found he warn't dead. He went an' told th' old man I wuz tryin' t' murder 'im; but he didn't git no satisfaction out er th' old man. So by-an'-by he 'n' th' hull gang come tumblin' back,

Tom's Vindication

wakin' me up, an' I see I hadn't dun no good, an' I'd hev t' take starn measures."

He was a bit of a poser, the mate, and no one better knew the dramatic value of a pause. His pipe had a habit of needing a light just before the crisis of a story was to come. He scratched a match on the ladder, drew the yellow flame half a dozen times down into the clay bowl, and surrounded his head with a mist. His audience was breathless; even Tom held the spoon poised over the candy he forgot to stir.

"What did you do, Mr. Moffat?" asked the Monkey, in a voice husky with excitement.

"I got a hull box o' loaded Winchester ca'tridges," said Moffat, deliberately, "an' I dropped 'em from th' deck down thet funnel into th' stove. Not *thet* stove; another one. Ther warn't much left o' that one."

He rose slowly, ascended the ladder, and disappeared in the midst of a chorus of "By Joves!" and "Whews!"

"Great Scott, fellows," said some one presently, "just think, that happened in the nineteenth century, and not in Africa or even out

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West, but among people who live in a law-abiding community! Isn't that gorgeous picturesqueness for you? Just think; twenty Winchester .40-82 bullets flying about this hen-coop!"

"They wuzn't no one kilt," came the deep voice of the fireman. "Th' stove wuz putty considerabul busted up, but it stopped most o' the bullets. But ther warn't no more trubbul with thet gang." And the voice chuckled away into silence.

In a moment Nimrod spoke.

"Of course no one was touched. A Winchester bullet would be spent after breaking open a stove, even if the bullet flew at all. I don't think it would fly. I think the lead would lie on the coals and send the shell away. There was nothing to be afraid of."

This statement drew forth hoots from occupants of bunks and chests. The Monkey rose suddenly, removing Nimrod's support, and causing the hunter to sprawl upon his back.

"You don't, you old braggart!" jeered the Monkey. "Go up! You know mighty well you would be the first man to skip out of such

Tom's Vindication

a situation," and eluding Nimrod's clutch at his ankles, he sprang to the deck.

"Now, Nim, honestly, what do you think you would do in a mess like that?" asked some one. Nimrod picked himself up and established himself in his seat.

"Do?" he growled, "I'd do just what I'm doing now. I'd sit on this chest and smoke. Gee! how good that candy smells! Isn't it almost done, Tommy?"

Sometimes Nim's habit of carrying everything off with bravado was exasperating. I saw several pairs of shoulders jerked up scornfully, but no one replied. For some moments the only sound to be heard was the swishing of the waves outside and an occasional rasp, as Tom cleared the sides of the kettle from the stiffening candy.

Puff!

A loud report thudded out of the stove. A spurt of fire leaped from the open grate. A great volume of smoke poured into the air. Every one started up.

Puff! puff! puff!

Fierce red flashes darted through the cloud. Immediately the air was opaque. I could

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hear the fellows clattering over the chests, but nothing could I see except wreaths and balls and sprays of white oily-looking smoke.

For myself, as soon as the three reports went off, I made myself as small as I could behind the partition of the bunk. For stopping a bullet it would have been about as effective as a sheet of paper, but it seemed like a refuge. I crouched in the corner during what seemed perhaps a long two minutes, waiting for more explosions, but none came. Presently the smoke whirled in at the entrance of my little box, and made me gasp. On deck there was a confusion of voices and tramping, dominated at last by a passionate protest from the Monkey.

"I tell you they were all blanks!"

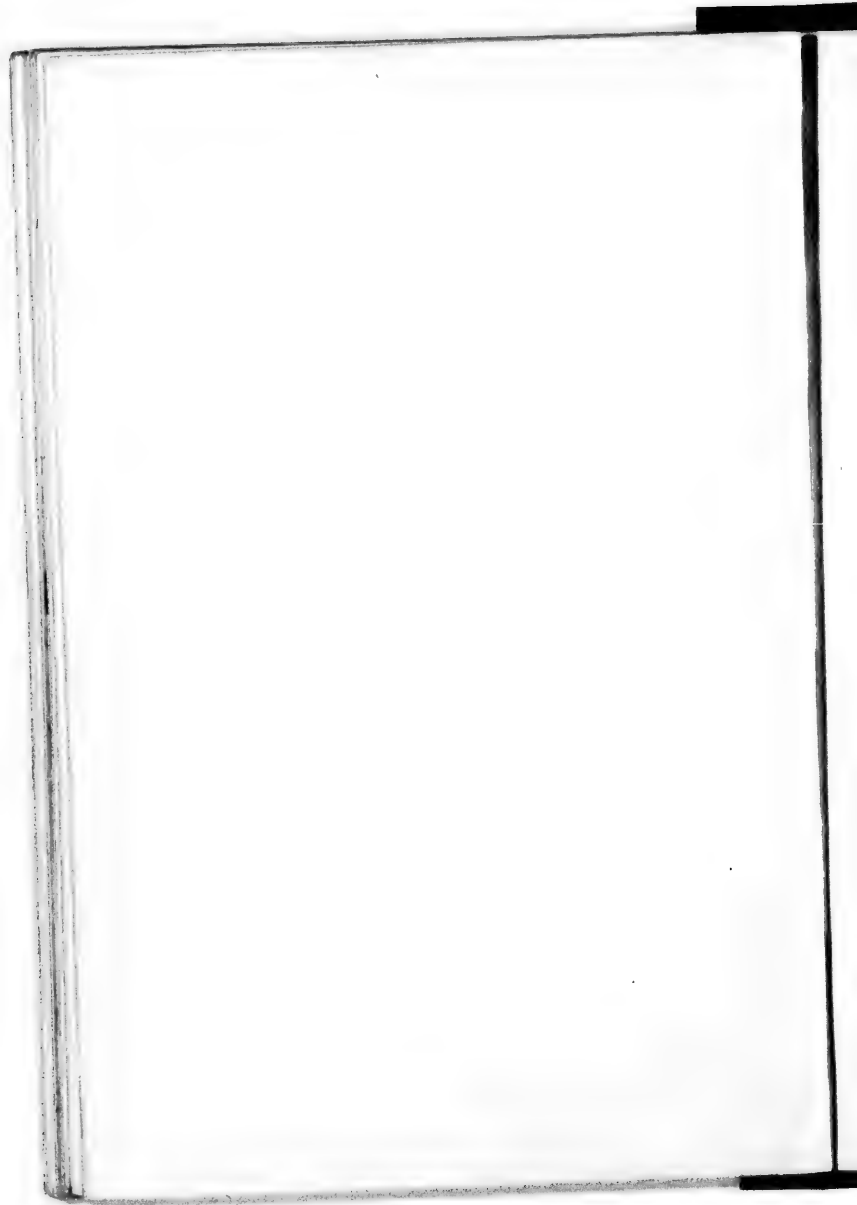
At this I started forth out of the smother. In the forecastle the smoke was pretty well cleared away; at least the chests and bunks were visible. They were quite unoccupied, either by seaman or explorer. But beside the stove, quietly stirring the candy, stood Tom. He had never once dropped the spoon.

"It did get a little smoky," he confessed,

Tom's Vindication

"and if any more puffs had come I think I should have left the candy to burn. But as for the bullets, I knew no one on board would do such a dreadful thing as to drop loaded cartridges into this party, so I just staid where I was. The candy is ready. Where is your pan?"

If any one else had taken the matter so quietly, I should have set it down to affectation. But Tom, never; he was as simple as an Eskimo. And although throughout the rest of the trip he was perpetually congratulated as a fire-eater, and held up as an example to Nimrod, who had been discovered behind the ship's funnel, he remained always simple, self-sacrificing, conscientious, and absent-minded.



AN ESKIMO WHIP

THE strangers with white faces declare that Anador saved them from unhappiness, perhaps from ruin. This appears preposterous to Anador, because, as she argues, at their great feast the white people had begun to save themselves from unhappiness, and, moreover, great wizards could never come to ruin.

That argument puts Eskimos to silence, for Eskimos know that the white race has magic powers; but it only causes white men to tousle Anador's hair, murmuring meanwhile *pushee mikysungwa*, which means "tiny seal." Anador is content with this nickname, because she is devoted to the strangers—though she does not understand them. No Eskimo understands them, or why they came to Innuït land. Merely to find out how cold the air is, and to make a perilous sledge journey into the snow-covered interior where Eskimos never go, and where there is noth-

Laughter of the Sphinx

ing to eat—surely these were not proper reasons for leaving a country so pleasant and so rich as the Mehica they were always describing. Some riches from Mehica they had brought with them. Among other things they had store of wood, with which they built a house—so great that, tall as they were, they could stand erect inside, and even lift their arms without striking the roof. Anador's father's stone house was as lofty as most Eskimo *igloos*, yet the slab overhead was always shiny, where the father's hair had rubbed it. In the vastnesses of the wooden room Anador's breath came slow and deep, as sometimes it did when she entered a gorge in the mountains behind the settlement. When she tried to express this the white men nodded politely, saying in their funny Eskimo, "Yes, much big!" but afterward they exchanged glances and laughed. Once Brow', the-white-man-who-scraped-his-face-with-a-knife (his name was not exactly Brow', but that was as near as Eskimos could get to the outlandish sound), had told her that in his country: "House big—much. Like this? No."

An Eskimo Whip

He lifted a harpoon and prodded the roof. Anador, who was used to signs, understood that in Mehica there was a house so high that you could not touch the roof with a harpoon.

"All of wood, Brow'?" asked Anador, half doubtful, though she knew white men never lied.

"Yes," replied Brow', "Mehica wood same as grass. Big like this"—he raised his hand from the floor, slowly and regularly, till it pointed almost as high as the tallest iceberg in the bay.

"Hi-i-igh!" he exclaimed. "Wood same as grass. Tree," he added, in Mehica language.

"Tee! tee!" repeated Anador, surprised, for she had supposed that wood came from the sea. It was upon the beach or in the waves that Eskimos found most of their few precious fragments.

"By and by," continued Brow', "you see tree. Tree there"—he pointed out of the window to one of the wooden affairs that held the goods of the white people. White men called them "boxy." This boxy was as long as the wooden *igloo* beside which it lay.

Laughter of the Spbinx

Thereafter whenever Anador visited Brow' she paused before the boxy to wonder what the tee looked like and when it would be visible. Brow' said *ichow, ichow, ichow*, which meant by and by, and she contented herself to wait, for she had confidence in Brow'. Her own people said he was the greatest of wizards, for it was to him that the iron charms with white faces talked, telling him how cold it was and whether a storm was coming, and he said, how hard the wind spirit was breathing.

But Anador was not afraid, for she knew white men never used their powers for evil. She and her little brother Kywingwa were constant visitors at white man's *igloo*, and received nothing but kindness.

Brow' and the very tall white man, called for his bigness Kabluna-suah, liked to have the children as guides in their shorter excursions. It was upon one of these excursions, out upon the treacherous ice in the bay after a wounded seal, that Brow' fell into the water. Weighed down with his furs he would have drowned but for Kabluna-suah.

The tall white man was half a harpoon cast

An Eskimo Whip

away, across a pool of water. He seized Kywingwa's dog-whip, flung the long lash within Brow's reach, hauled him across the pool and lifted him out.

Instead of running home, all dripping and shivering as he was, Brow' grasped Kabluna-suah's hand in the odd fashion of white people, and for a moment the two men stood looking at each other.

After that they were the closest of comrades. As the autumn came on and the sun, which for many sleeps had not set, began to dip beneath the mountains, remaining hidden each day longer than the day before, and as frequent snows covered the brown cliffs with a delicate tracery of white and the bay froze solid, and the birds and animals fled to the South, the friendship of the two men became so close that even their companions made a joke of it. During all the waking times, they were not a harpoon cast apart. Even when the snow was dry like sand with the cold, and Eskimos themselves preferred to remain indoors, if Kabluna-suah practised sledging with the dog team Brow' was at hand to watch the nose of his friend, lest it should

Laughter of the Sphinx

freeze after the ridiculous manner of white noses.

Brow' never learned to drive the team and that was what made his eager desire for Kywingwa's whip seem so astonishing. He offered the most valuable things for the whip; a knife, even a piece of wood large enough for several harpoon shafts. No other whip would do, said Brow'.

But Kywingwa had no sealskin line to make another lash and the sledging season was at hand. The boy was driving his first dog team; to expect him to sell the whip was preposterous.

The sun ceased to show himself. At first, for a few moments in every waking time, his rays illumined the distant snowpeaks with a rosy glow, but finally this ceased, and time was divided into lengthening darknesses and shortening twilights.

A heavy snowstorm covered the bay shore, the ice and the mountains. The white men banked over the great *igloo* with warm snow, just as the Eskimos banked over their little stone houses, and inside they lived snug, with their vast lamp that burned black stones.

An Eskimo Whip

During every twilight they came forth to run about or to tumble in the snow ; it kept them healthy, they said. Indoors they were always busy. Some built sledges for the silly trip over the inland snow-desert in the spring. Kabluna-suah was one of these, and beside him sat Brow', making upon the thin white substance marks that talked.

When he was not making the talking marks he held the children, one upon either knee ; and they in turn held for Kabluna-suah the tools he was not using, and meanwhile they taught Brow' the Eskimo words for things ; and all four chattered and laughed and were happy.

But the twilights dimmed and shortened. It was a hard winter, even for Eskimos ; there was much wind. Quiet cold is endurable, but woe to the white man, or, for that matter, to the Eskimo, who is caught out in a winter gale. The strangers unable to take their exercise turned sad. Brow' held the children upon his knee, but no longer joked or interested himself in Eskimo words ; he sat brooding. By the middle of winter, when the dim twilights hardly interrupted the darkness,

Laughter of the Sphinx

the white men were worse than solemn ; they were cross. Anador thought they tried to be gentle, but something inside them was vexing. The whole white settlement was at odds. And at last came the worst. For no apparent reason Brow' and Kabluna-suah snapped angry words at each other, while their comrades and the Eskimos listened in awe.

There followed sad times for the children. No longer did they sit upon Brow's knees ; Brow' kept his knees under the table and absorbed himself in his talking marks. Kabluna-suah transferred his sledge across the *igloo*. The two men never spoke to each other ; Kabluna-suah rarely spoke to any one.

"What bad spirit has entered Kabluna-suah?" asked Kywingwa as the children were plodding their snowy way to make one of their calls, now, alas, rare, upon the white men.

"He does not let me carve harpoon-heads with his knife. Mine is not good. I asked him and he pushed me away."

"I don't know," sighed Anador. Brow', too, had a spirit. But a little while ago,

An Eskimo Whip

Kywingwa, I met him with his lamp, looking at the wind instrument, and he laughed and shivered and said 'much cold! br-r-r-rh!' just as he always did before the darkness came."

"*Peeook!* I was going to tell you," chimed in Kywingwa. "I think the others are kinder. They are going to do something strange. I heard two of them singing, and they told me 'after two sleeps much laugh.'"

"Father says," mused Anador half aloud, "that all white men are like this. Many suns ago, before we were born, other white men came, and in winter they quarrelled. Father says it is a disease the white tribe has—just as our dogs go mad in hot weather."

This was too subtle for Kywingwa, who was a boy and practical.

"Anador," he said, flicking the tip off a snow drift with his whip, "is it in your mind that, if I should give this to Brow' he would give me a knife? I do not need the whip now. Before next sledging season I could make another."

At this point the children reached the *igloo* and forgot the whip. For the snow-drift

Laughter of the Sphinx

under which the tee had lain was a little valley and the tee was gone.

Inside the *igloo* the white people were making changes. Around the great room they were hanging a long rope of green stuff that was neither grass nor moss, but somewhat like both. The air was rich with a pungency that made Anador draw deep breaths.

At the windows (filled in with the clear ice that never melted) hung circles of the same green. Upon one wall was fixed a vertical piece of green crossed by a shorter horizontal piece.

The white men were hanging across a corner of the room a great square of that kind of soft skin which they used indoors for clothing.

What had come over them? They were in their old spirits; they were talking and laughing merrily. Seeing the children they beckoned. Brow' tumbled Anador's hair and laughed and the children laughed in wondering delight.

Presently Kywingwa, the practical, took advantage of his chance.

An Eskimo Whip

"Kabluna-suah," he called, "will you lend me your knife— *Ai-o!* Where is Kabluna-suah?" he asked in bewilderment.

The laughter died away. Brow' glanced toward the shelves where the white men slept. Before the shelf of the great white man a soft skin was drawn. Kabluna-suah had shut himself in.

"Come," said Brow' hastily, "children, see charm snow?"

He fumbled in his own shelf and returned with a little iron net. Something in the net rattled over the meshes. Brow' lifted the top from the great iron lamp and showed the stones burned red hot.

Over them he shook the net, and a wonderful thing happened. Above that fire, hot enough to melt a small glacier, the net began to fill with snow. The great flakes darted about to a loud, snapping noise, like the echoes of a rifle among many icebergs. When the net was full Brow' emptied the snow into a white shiny pot. This he held forth to the children, but such magic had terrified even Anador.

Laughter of the Sphinx

"See," said Brow', "not hurt. Good. You take."

He caught Anador by a reluctant wrist, turned her palm uppermost and filled it with snow. The snow was slightly warm.

"Eat! Good food!" commanded Brow'. The snow crunched pleasantly between Anador's teeth, and she smiled vaguely around the circle of white men. This caused a new laugh; apparently the magic had put her friends in good humor.

Presently all but Brow' returned to the mysterious corner, and Anador watched the production of more snow—a great heap that drifted over the pot.

"Brow," whispered Anador, struck by a sudden thought, "you are a great *angekok*. Cannot you charm the madness away from Kabluna-suah?"

Brow's face saddened. Again he glanced at the drawn skin. Then he laid a hand upon the shoulder of each child.

"See, children!" he said. "White men much work. Children go. Tell all Eskimos after one sleep come visit white man's *igloo*. Much laugh. Children go. Tell Eskimos,"

An Eskimo Ubbip

and he gently pushed them through the passage.

All through the waking time, above the white men's *igloo*, the stars were dimmed with smoke from the great lamp. The children watched it as they plodded from *igloo* to *igloo* with their message. Sometimes they heard shouts of merriment echoing up with the smoke.

Their father received the invitation with signs of pleasure.

"It is good," the children heard him say when all the family were composed for sleep upon their fur-covered shelf, "if they can keep out the bad spirits for a few sleeps more it will be well. The sun begins to return then, and with his return the madness disappears. But if Kabluna-suah remains ugly no one knows what may happen."

It was with eagerness that, as the next faint twilight was fading, the children and their parents betook themselves to the great *igloo*. Brow' met them, stretching his arms.

"I much eat," he laughed. "Take off *koolatahs*. Sit here."

He led them to places in the front row of

Laughter of the Sphinx

a crowd of white men and Eskimos intermingled seated upon the floor at one end of the room. Presently Kabluna-suah seated himself beside Kywingwa. With her father's comment in mind, Anador regarded him apprehensively. He was not ill-tempered, but seemed rather weary.

"Good?" he inquired languidly, waving his hand toward the great square skin in the corner.

The room was unusually dark; none of the lamps was burning. But the centre of the skin and the roof above the corner were illumined with soft light.

"*Na-na-na-na-ay!*" murmured Anador. She looked about for Brow' to sympathize with her, but Brow' had disappeared. The Eskimo faces behind her, touched with the faint radiance were themselves alight with smiles. The Eskimos were chattering and admiring, but the white people were quiet, as if waiting for something to happen.

A white man hissed for silence, and out of the distance came a faint tinkling like the sound of little water-drops falling from an ice-floe in the sunlight.

An Eskimo Whip

The tinkling increased, drew nearer, turned harsher. The door burst open, and into the room, driving before him a dog-team whose traces jangled with bits of metal, strode a stout, fur-clad man. His hood was thrown back, and his hair, which was white as snow, hung down upon his shoulders.

"Hurrah," shouted all the white men.

"*Na-na-na-na-ay!*" exclaimed the Eskimos. Never before had they seen hair like that.

"Hurrah!" responded the newcomer. He drove his dogs into a corner, cast down the traces, and presented to the company a great flaming face and a snow-drift of a beard.

"Hurrah!" he shouted. Waving a staff and striding up and down he said many things in the white man's tongue. At times his voice rose loud, whereupon the white men struck their palms together, making a sharp noise; and when at last after a violent passage he paused, they cheered.

The stranger flourished his pole and dashed the great square skin to the floor.

Had the sky fallen into the corner? For an instant Anador thought so. There were

Laughter of the Sphinx

the bright stars and the dark depths! there were the bands of many hued radiances, tiny imitations of the lights that gleam in the Southeast for the dead hunters when they play football with walrus skulls. And when, after a moment of bewilderment, Anador perceived that they did not change and shimmer as the spirit-lights and that the dark spaces were solid and green and that the stars were flames like the *igni* of the white people, but of many colors, each swaying upon a spray of the green stuff—even when she knew it was not the sky, Anador still felt her breath coming in gasps. For Kabluna-suah, noticing her surprise, had whispered:

"See, Anador. Wood! tree!"

"*Na-na-na-na-a-a-ay!*" she whispered. This, then, was wood, growing like grass. And it was from a land where such things were that the white men came to her cold, desolate country.

"Kabluna-suah," she asked impulsively, "why do you come here?"

The white man eyed her keenly for a moment and she saw that he understood. The first smile that she had seen upon his

An Eskimo Whip

face for many sleeps glimmered about his eyes.

"Innuited very beautiful!" he said, but Anador has never known what he meant.

Now occurred a new marvel. The red-faced stranger drew from the mass of the tee objects wrapped in the thin white substance that held talking marks.

These objects he distributed among the white men. Each received several gifts. Nor were they indifferent. The dignity natural with the white race vanished; one and all, the Kabluna tore away the wrappers and exhibited the contents and laughed, shouted and chattered, as childish in their glee as ever was an Eskimo of the tribe.

The use of the things was quite out of Anador's knowledge, but the white men were besides themselves with delight. Only Kabluna-suah, Anador noticed, acknowledged his gifts with a cold jerk of the head, and opened them slowly and sadly.

Suddenly she was aware of the white-whiskered man holding forth an object to her. She screamed and shrank back. Kabluna-suah received the gift for her and tore away

Laughter of the Sphinx

the wrapper. Then she screamed again, this time with pleasure. Inside was one of the criss-cross instruments used by the white people to cut skins, and, delight of delights, beside it needles, needles, needles! Needles of all sizes in a shining row; enough to last the lives of herself and her children; enough to make her a rich woman.

An exclamation from Kywingwa startled her; he was holding a knife, like Kabluna-suah's. Behind her the tribe was well-nigh *pehbloktoo*. Every one was receiving gifts. No such store of wealth had ever before been seen in Eskimoland. Nothing was to be heard but "*na-na-na-na-a-ay*" and "*pee-you-yoo-ook*." The white people had forgotten their own pleasure in watching the delight of the Innuits.

Kabluna-suah only, still sad, bent over an odd gift of his own. It was a limp, soft thing, as pink as a sunset cloud. Kabluna-suah lifted it to his lips and drew a long breath. Perceiving Anador wistful he smiled faintly and held it almost against her face. Anador inhaled a sweet, dreamy smell, like nothing she had ever known. Again and again she

An Eskimo Whip

drew it in, and smiled her pleasure at Kabluna-suah. But Kabluna-suah's eyes were misty and did not meet hers.

The white-haired man still stamped to and fro with his gifts. Even to the dogs he cast presents; huge slices of walrus meat. They received it, in the usual manner of Eskimo dogs, with a scrimmage. Pau, the king dog, stole his wife's share and carried it apart to eat. The white-haired man stooped to snatch it away, and hair, beard, and face fell upon the floor.

"Kywingwa, it's Brow'!" exclaimed Anador. "Kywingwa, he is *peeook!* Give him your whip!"

Hand in hand the children crossed the *igloo* to where Brow', laughing, was trying to readjust his red face. Timidly, for she was in awe of the face, Anador held the whip toward the white man. He took it and smiled reassuringly, but Anador turned to retreat.

"Anador," said Brow'.

He had dropped the face and was examining the whip. Presently he looked across the *igloo* to where Kabluna-suah was still

Laughter of the Sphinx

bending thoughtfully over his sweet-smelling gift.

For some moments Brow' mused, glancing alternately from the whip to the great white man.

"Come," he said at last.

He led the way to his shelf, made talking marks, and placed them, with the whip, in Anador's hands.

"Give Kabluna-suah!" he directed.

Obediently Anador bore the talking words and the whip and laid them beneath Kabluna-suah's down-cast eyes.

Kabluna-suah sprang to his feet, with a noise. The chatter ceased. For a moment, amid dead silence the two white men gazed into each other's eyes, as they had gazed once before upon the ice floe. Then they strode together and clasped hands. And the cheer that burst from all the white men set a-quiver all the lights upon the tee.

Anador's father was right. No harm came to the white people. As by degrees the twilights lengthened, the strangers recovered their spirits. By full springtide they were ready to make their long sledge journey, and

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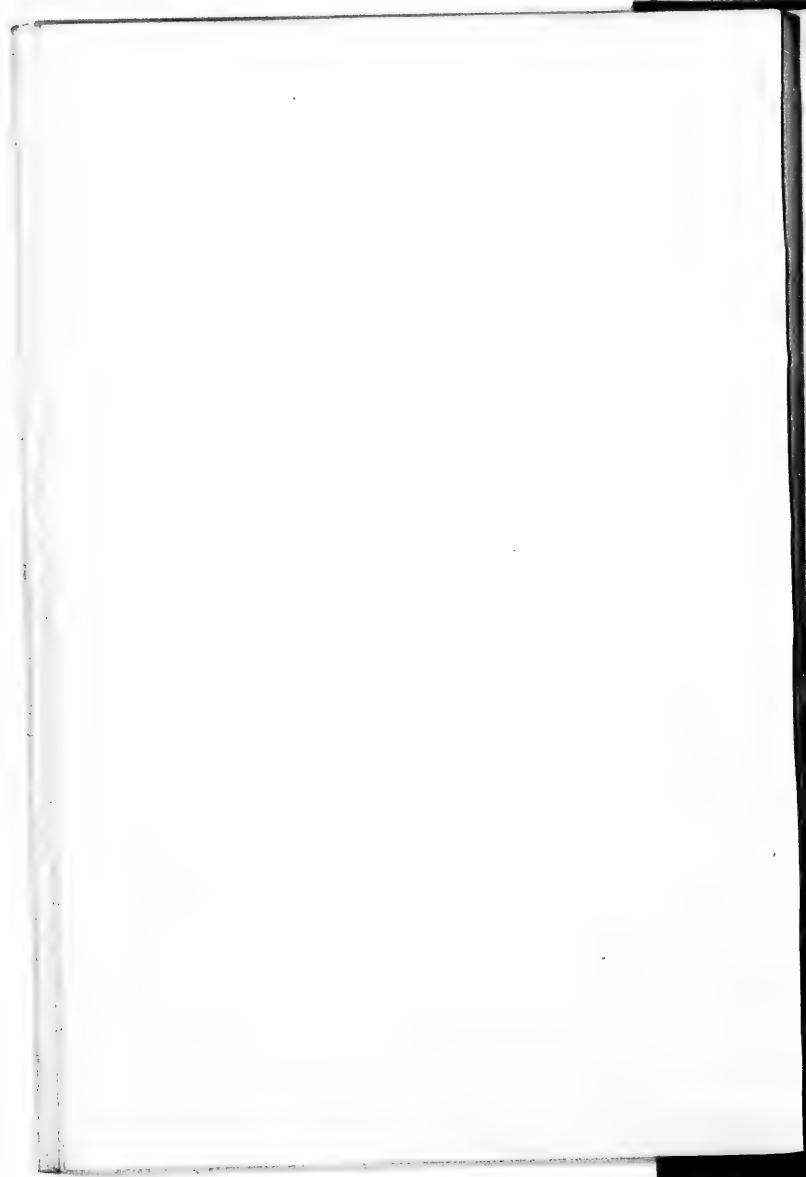
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An Eskimo Whip

when summer was almost over they returned
safe and triumphant.

Meanwhile, although Anador pondered
much over the matter, she never quite under-
stood it. Why did the white people bestow
gifts? Why did the whip and the talking
words make friends of Brow' and Kabluna-
suah?

She had picked up the talking words and
she cherished them all through that happy
winter and summer; nay, she has them still,
and will show them to you. They will say
to you, if you can understand talking words:
"A Happy Christmas, old chap!"



THE GLACIER IMPLEMENT

FOR a boy of twelve Kywingwa knew many things. He could pick out the likeliest situations for fox-traps. He knew how to stalk an Arctic hare, and to shoot her with his bow and arrow. He could point to the spot in the water where a seal which had dived would probably rise. With the whip he was, for a *mickanniny*, really expert; for not only had he ceased now to slash himself in the back of the neck, when he whirled the thirty-foot lash, but also he was beginning to direct his strokes with accuracy. And in one exercise he was pre-eminent above all other boys in Greenland. That exercise was throwing the harpoon. Even the older Eskimos were accustomed to gather when with his comrades he practised harpooning, and to praise the accuracy of his aim and the power of his delivery.

In other than physical things, also, was Ky-

Laughter of the Sphinx

wingwa versed. Eskimo emotions are comparatively simple, and the lad had learned to guess pretty accurately the motives for the actions of his friends. But he was utterly bewildered by the conduct of a party of seemingly crazy people with white faces, who had come from across the sea, and had built a wonderful house on the shores of the bay upon which Kywingwa lived. The house was as big as many Eskimo *igloos* together, and it was constructed not of sealskins, nor even of stones, but of wood. Kywingwa had never before seen a piece of wood larger than a harpoon-shaft. The Eskimos treasured with the greatest care even small splinters of the precious substance. Kywingwa himself had rather a large piece, with moreover a sharp spike of iron in its end, which made it more valuable. This instrument, used to prevent a seal from escaping after you had once fastened to him with your harpoon, had been handed down to Kywingwa from his great-grandfather. It was called a *pusheemut*. Kywingwa had been very proud of owning a *pusheemut*. But when he saw the great quantities of wood possessed by

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The Glacier Implement

the white people his pride fell. They had not only enough long, broad pieces to build the great *igloo*, but also a vast number of smaller sticks left over. Curiously enough, they did not seem to value them very highly; they would give one to you almost always if you would help them with the queer things that they were constantly doing.

Some of them wandered along the beach and picked up shells, and they liked to have you bring them all the unusual shells that you could find. Others gathered different kinds of flowers, and were much pleased if you covered for them a variety that they had not come across. One of them had a net not unlike the net the Eskimos were accustomed to use in catching little auks, only of much finer mesh, and made of a soft material that was not sealskin string. With it the white man pursued, not birds, but insects: butterflies, and bumblebees, and spiders, and all the other kinds of small creatures that abound in Greenland during the warm summer. He was a very enthusiastic white man, and the Eskimos named him after his favorite prey, *Arhiveh*, the spider.

Laughter of the Sphinx

Whenever Kywingwa was not asleep he was sure to be either at the white man's *igloo*, or else away upon some excursion with the butterfly-hunter, whom he liked best of all. In return, the white man showed a warm affection for Kywingwa. He taught him to catch butterflies, and made for him a little net. And when they went forth together he once or twice even let the boy bear the glacier implement, which Kywingwa held to be the most beautiful of all created things.

It was a wonderful implement: a long, springy, wooden shaft, with a head made of a substance as hard as iron, but so shiny that you could see your face in it, just as in a pool of water. One side of the head was a blade with which to chop ice; the other side was a long, sharp spike.

"What a fine thing for seal-hunting!" exclaimed all the Eskimos when they saw it. Kywingwa more than the others admired it. He was wont to stand before it as it hung in the great wooden *igloo* and gaze at it, and touch the keen edge of the blade softly with his fingers. Once or twice Arhiveh saw him caressing it, and laughed.

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The Glacier Implement

"Good?" he inquired in his broken Eskimo.

"*Pee-you-yook-ami-i-ishua!*" Kywingwa cried.

He admired it humbly, however, and without hope of possessing it. It was not for Eskimos to aspire to perfect things; they were for white people only.

But the most noteworthy event in Kywingwa's life occurred and changed his point of view. Entering the wooden *igloo* upon a certain waking-time, he saw Arhiveh bending over a tiny brown butterfly in his palm. The white man appeared to be disturbed.

"*Agai*, Kywingwa!" he said.

Obediently approaching, the lad perceived that the insect lacked one wing.

"*Takoo*, Kywingwa," said Arhiveh, "you capture butterfly, good butterfly. Not like this—" he stood erect, with one arm behind him, and moved the other arm vigorously up and down. "Like this—" both arms going hard. Kywingwa laughed with glee and nodded.

"*Peook!*" continued Arhiveh, "you catch butterfly, I give you—"

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He paused, and the boy was seized with an impulse he could not control.

"*Oona!*" he cried, and pointed to the glacier implement.

The butterfly-hunter seemed a good deal surprised. Kywingwa was breathless.

At last Arhiveh laughed.

"*Peook!*" he said, "you catch good butterfly. I give you—yes, I give you *that*."

What Kywingwa did next he does not remember. Arhiveh has told him that he stood as if dazed for a moment, and then rushed out. The first memory that comes to him is of seeking for his net among the harpoons, and pieces of ivory, and sealskin water-buckets in his father's tent, and of repeating over and over:

"A tiny brown butterfly with *two* wings!"

At last he found his net, and after a moment's thought he took his *pusheemut*. The white people usually carried their glacier implements on important excursions. Kywingwa was going upon an excursion that he deemed very important, and the *pusheemut* was the best substitute for a glacier implement that he had. Recently, Arhiveh had

The Glacier Implement

sharpened the spike, and the *pusheemut* was much more efficient than of old. A piece of seal-flipper also he picked up, and started forth, repeating to himself: "A tiny brown butterfly."

The valley where butterflies lived was a long distance up toward the head of the bay. Kywingwa had been there several times with Arhiveh, but always in a woman's boat with four men to propel it. To walk there would take a long time and would probably tire him, but he was too much excited to dwell upon that thought, and he set out briskly.

But after a long time he did grow very weary. The walking was exceedingly bad; there was no path but the beach between the sea and the vast cliffs, and it was covered with sharp stones which hurt his feet, for he had forgotten to stuff grass between the soles of his boots and his dogskin stockings.

The sun completed more than half its circular course in the sky, dipped till its edge touched the mountains across the bay to the north, and then began to rise once more. Kywingwa had never been so long away from

Laughter of the Sphinx

home alone before, but whenever discouragement threatened, he thought of the glacier implement and plodded on. And at last, just as the sun reached his highest point, the lad rounded a promontory and came into the valley of butterflies. He found a small stream, and threw himself down beside it to rest, eat his seal-meat, and survey his territory.

Between little smooth hills small brooks ran; and along these brooks grew vividly green grass and bright flowers. It was among the flowers that the butterflies lived.

The seal-flipper was good; he ate it all, drank of the pure, cold water that flowed from the melting snow on the plateau, and started forth. Up and down the little streams he wandered, following one back as far as the cliffs, then crossing to the next one and tracing it down to its mouth. He saw plenty of bumblebees, plenty of flies, even plenty of brown butterflies, dancing in the hot sunlight, but none like that Arhiveh had shown him.

"What shall I do?" he asked himself.

He decided to try the next valley.

The Glacier Implement

The next valley was filled by a great white glacier. Evidently there were no butterflies there. But Kywingwa discerned, across the front of the glacier, a third valley that looked promising. Grown Eskimos rarely crossed glaciers, and he was but a *mickaniny*. But he was still borne onward by the thought of the glacier implement.

It was a noisy glacier. Out toward the centre huge masses were splitting off with tremendous crashes and plunging into the sea. The body of the glacier creaked, the torrent at the side roared. Not to be daunted by noise, Kywingwa passed into the gorge along the side of the glacier, where the cliffs on his right hand dropped stones a thousand feet down at him, and the chill of the ice at his left hand entered into his bones. At length he found a place where he could cross the torrent, on some stones, to a part of the glacier which sloped away, so that he could mount to the surface. He turned toward the valley opposite. Presently he came to rougher ice; from the surface of the glacier rose in all directions sharp peaks. Yawning cracks appeared and then chasms so wide that he had

Laughter of the Sphinx

to make long detours around them, or to cross by dangerous snow-bridges.

Upon one of these bridges a misfortune happened to Kywingwa. The snow appeared perfectly solid ; nevertheless an impulse led the lad to test it. With the handle of his butterfly-net he prodded, and the handle passed through. Kywingwa lost his balance and fell. Down crashed the snow-bridge into the crevasse. Kywingwa's head and right arm hung over the abyss. It was some minutes before he recovered from the shock, and then he found that his butterfly-net had fallen into the chasm. Remembering, however, that he had caught many butterflies in his hand before the net had been his, he determined to proceed to the other side of glacier. Fortune, he hoped, would send him the butterfly.

In his path lay a stream altogether too broad to be jumped, and, though rather shallow, too swift to be waded. It had worn a deep bed in the hard ice—a bed as blue as the sky, and so smooth, so exquisitely smooth, that the water hardly rippled as it rushed along. Not the length of a harpoon-line

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The Glacier Implement

away from the spot where Kywingwa stood it plunged into a deep crevasse, whence rose a heavy rumbling.

Patiently Kywingwa followed up the stream till he came to an ice-bridge. He crossed it, meeting with no further obstructions, and presently stood upon the edge of the glacier, and looked up and down the gorge at its side.

Far down by the bay, toward the end of the great white mass, the cliffs receded, the land was low, the sun shone; it seemed just the place for butterflies. Kywingwa found a slope where he could descend into the gorge, and turned toward the fertile spot.

As he emerged from the shadow of the cliff, he came out into full sunlight, and found himself surrounded by rivulets, by flowers, and by insects. And before he could well note these things, lo! from under his feet rose and settled again the very object of his search—the little brown butterfly!

Kywingwa stole toward it, came within his own length of it, leaped with open hands upon it. In vain! The little creature darted

Laughter of the Sphinx

from his grasp. Always keeping it in view, Kywingwa scrambled to his feet and gave chase. Down nearly to the beach it led him; then it doubled, dodged him, and made off up the hill toward the cliff. Kywingwa tried to follow, but to no purpose; it alighted far away and out of sight. Bitterly disappointed, the boy shuffled through the grass, hoping to scare up the insect once more; but his efforts were futile. And presently he was aware that the sun had gone behind the hills, and that not only his butterfly, but also all the other insects, had disappeared.

Kywingwa was far from home—almost two sleeps away. He was footsore. He was without food. These things troubled him but little; he had been hungry, lame, and astray many times before. But he was utterly cast down because the butterfly had escaped. His journey was useless; he had lost his net; he had failed to win the glacier implement.

"*Piungitoo wunga amishua!* I am good for nothing, good for nothing!" he cried, and threw himself upon the ground. In a moment he was sound asleep.

The Glacier Implement

Awaking, he perceived that the sun was shining brightly once more, and that the insects were playing briskly. He must have slept a very long while. He was ravenously hungry.

"I will try to hit a little auk with a stone," he said, and trudged back to certain rocks near the glacier, whence came the chatter of the small birds.

But just as he arrived at the foot of the ice, he heard a shrill sound. He knew at once what produced it; it came from one of those curious little wooden instruments which shrieked when you blew into them. Looking up, he beheld Arhiveh, with butterfly-net in one hand, and glacier implement in the other, standing firmly, in his boots shod with sharp spikes, upon the very edge of the ice-wall. Kywingwa felt a pang of disappointment at sight of the glacier implement; but he forgot it in his surprise because Arhiveh was alone. White men did not usually venture upon glaciers by themselves; something extraordinary must have occurred.

The little Eskimo hastened to the stepping-stones, crossed the torrent, and in a moment

Laughter of the Sphinx

was by Arhiveh's side. The white man's voice was gruff, as he accosted the boy.

"Not dead, Kywingwa?" he inquired. "Mother say you lost. Say you food all gone. She go like this—" he rubbed his eyes with his hand, in imitation of a weeping woman. "White men all go look. I come woman's boat. Woman's boat there," he added, pointing to the opposite corner of the glacier. "Come on!"

"I tried to catch the butterfly," explained Kywingwa, as they started. "I wanted to win the glacier implement. But my net dropped into the crevasse. I saw a butterfly, but I could not capture him."

"You very much no good! You lost, mother afraid," was the ungracious reply.

Kywingwa felt that he was in disgrace. He took thankfully some seal-meat that Arhiveh had brought him, and ate it silently, being very miserable. Presently Arhiveh reached the stream, and turned to the left to find the ice-bridge. A tiny brown something fluttered before Kywingwa's eyes. The boy paused, stared, rubbed his eyes, looked again, and then shouted at the top of his voice.

The Glacier Implement

"Arhiveh, Arhiveh!" he cried; "*takoo iblee! takoo! Tachidigia!*"

The white man seized his net and dashed after the tiny creature. Kywingwa watched him eagerly. The butterfly fluttered aimlessly about for a moment, and then crossed the stream. Arhiveh sprang recklessly after it, missed his footing, and fell into the water.

Kywingwa burst out into laughter, and waited gleefully to greet his companion, scrambling, soaked with ice-cold water, from the stream. But no head appeared above the bank, and Kywingwa ran to see what was the matter.

The white man had not risen. He was lying in the water, with his head downstream. He was struggling violently. He was floating rapidly down. The cataract was close at hand.

At once the meaning of the situation burst upon Kywingwa's mind. Arhiveh could not rise—the bottom of the stream was too slippery. He was trying to use the spikes in his shoes, but to no purpose, for his feet were upstream. Faster and faster he was swept helplessly along.

Laughter of the Sphinx

Instantly Kywingwa saw what he must do. He sprang upon a mound of ice that almost overhung the water. Balanced as a harpoon in his hand was his newly sharpened *pusheemut*.

Down came the helpless Arhiveh, now floating rapidly; in another instant he would be opposite the Eskimo's position. Then, with all his force, Kywingwa hurled his *pusheemut*. Its point entered the hard ice-bed of the current, and the weapon stood upright. The white man was borne against it; instinctively he clutched it. It held for an instant, then the ice about it chipped and it gave way. But that instant was enough. Arhiveh had swung around, his feet were downstream, his course was checked. Before the powerful little brook could take hold of him again, he had driven his shoe-spikes into the ice, and, using the *pusheemut* as a rest, had risen to his feet. He stood as if dazed, while Kywingwa brought the glacier implement, and lying flat, reached it down to him. Then he cut notches for himself and ascended out of the bed of the brook. The *pusheemut* floated away.

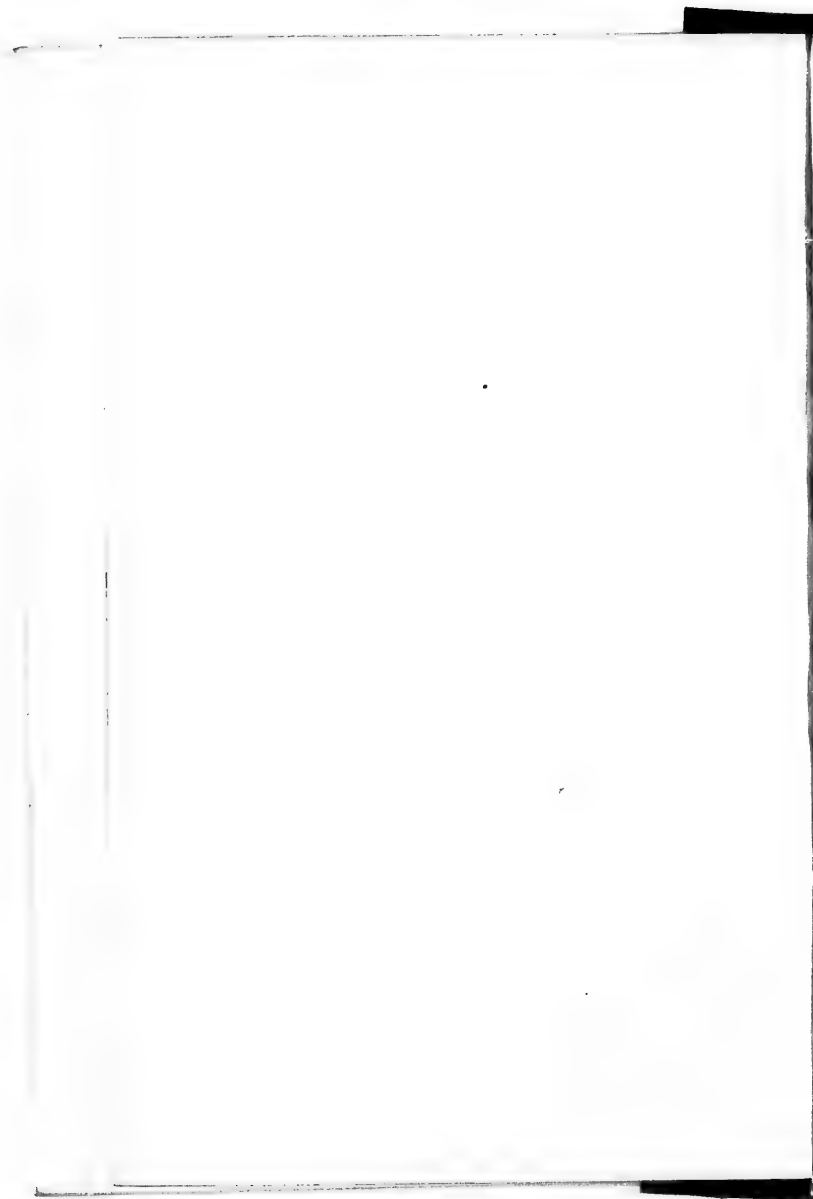
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Kywingwa reached down the glacier-implement.



The Glacier Implement

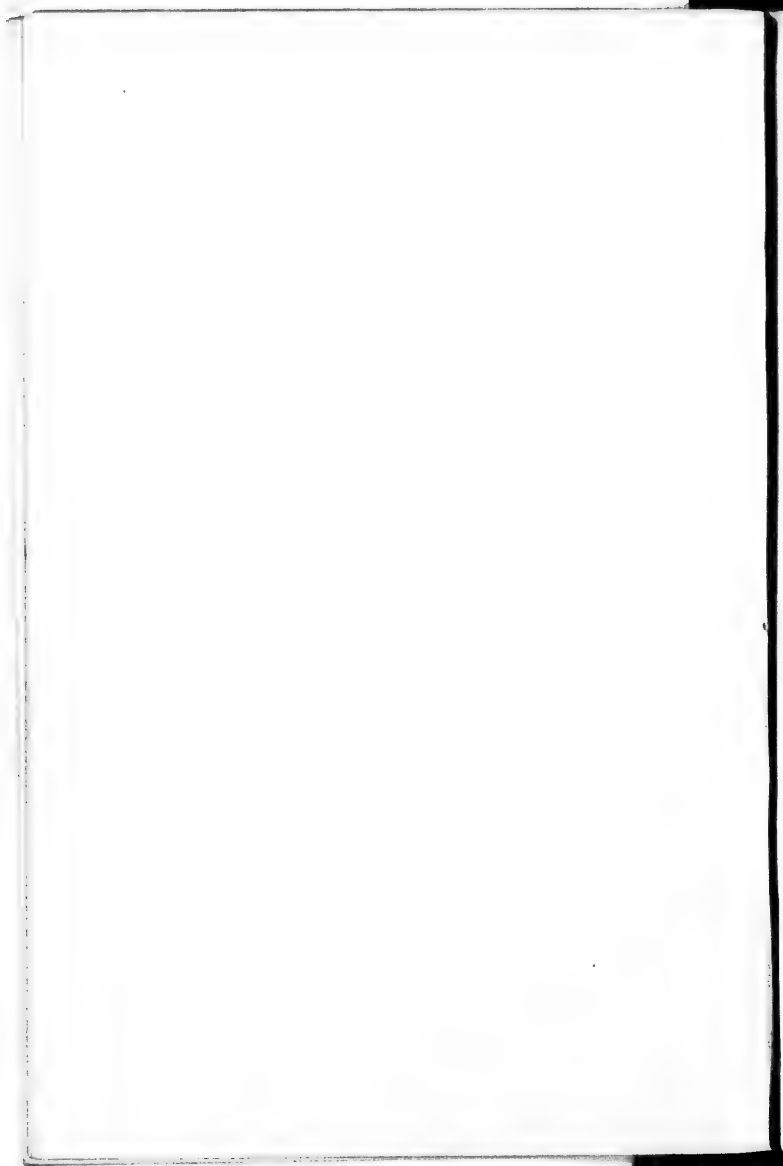
Kywingwa was ready to laugh with him over his escape. But white people always acted so oddly! When he was once more safe on the surface of the glacier, Arhiveh stood and simply looked about him. He gazed across the white expanse of ice to the cliffs, tinted with red lichen and green grass. He looked out over the bay to the blue sea. He looked at the sun, which, as all Eskimos know, is a bad thing to do: it ruins the eyes. Finally, he walked to the crevasse, and peered into the dark depths.

Kywingwa looked cautiously down, too, and wondered where his *pusheemut* was. Presently, the white man turned toward him.

"*Pusheemut?*" asked Kywingwa, shyly. "Did you see my *pusheemut*? Has the water eaten it?"

"*Pusheemut!*" exclaimed Arhiveh, vehemently. "See, Kywingwa, I not talk Eskimo. But you very good! You go white man's house—I give you plenty *pusheemuts*. Here, Kywingwa, I give you this."

He held forth his hand, and in it was the glacier implement.



IN ARCTIC MOONLIGHT

FROM the rim of the moon, gliding northward along the cliff-summits of Ellesmere Land, there fell across the frozen sound a long, silvery shimmer. It began in a point at the hither edge of the distant mountain-shadows, broadened regularly over the level ice, and vanished under the feet of the sledge party. Neither Kywingwa nor Telekoteah, his father, would have glanced at it a second time if the white man had not behaved so oddly. In all the cold he stood motionless, with eyes uplifted towards the shining mountain-crests. Kywingwa thought he might be frozen.

"What is he doing?" whispered Kywingwa.

His father looked up from the broken sledge-runner which he was binding together with a thong of walrus hide.

Laughter of the Sphinx

"Be silent," he replied. "I do not know. No one knows the ways of the white men. The whole white tribe is a little crazy."

"Yes," assented Kywingwa. That was well known among the Eskimos.

"Yes," repeated his father. "Ting-mi-huk-suah, the great spirit, made them first, and they turned out bad, like your first harpoon. Therefore, Ting-mi-huk-suah sent the whole tribe away to sea in one of his old shoes and made us. We are the perfect tribe. There," concluded Telekoteah, with a final tug at the knot. "Now we are ready to go on again. What is it you see, Kab-luna-suah? Is it the bear?"

The white man, turning half about to lay one hand upon Telekoteah's arm, pointed with the other hand to the sky above the horizon. The moon-rim had disappeared behind a peak. Above this dark crest and around it the air was liquid light. The stars, rayless yellow balls, floated at different depths in the fluid, as phosphorescence floats in the translucent Arctic Ocean.

"Telekoteah," asked the white man, whose face was working with the effort to express a

In Arctic Moonlight

subtle idea in his broken Eskimo, "Telekoteah, do your wise men tell you? Does Ting-mi-huk-suah *drink* moonlight? Eh? Great spirit *drink* moonlight? Eh?"

"Ugh," responded Telekoteah shortly. "I was afraid it was the bear. No, I never heard such a story. Come, let's start. The sledge is ready."

"*Tatingwa!*" exclaimed the white man. "I am not good! We must hurry. We load seal. You head, I tail. Now! Good!" he concluded, as the seal fell snugly into place. "Good! Now rifle! Things that say *booh* all gone! Rifle no good! Bear come! We have no rifle, two dogs only. Two dogs; you spear; I knife. Can we kill bear? Eh? No! Eh?"

He pictured his questions with gestures, laughing meanwhile at his own mistakes. Kywingwa, who had been looking at the moon, could not help laughing, too; but Telekoteah responded only with a grunt. He moved away to where his whip lay in the snow. Kywingwa crept to the white man's side.

"Kabluna-suah," he murmured, "I have

Laughter of the Sphinx

been looking. It *would* be good for the spirits to drink."

The white man said nothing, but in a moment he held out his hand. Kywingwa placed his own in it, after the manner he had learned from the white people, and both man and boy turned once more to the illuminated east. Telekoteah returned with his whip.

"Ready!" he called gruffly. "Unless you want your friends to starve, Kabluna-suah, start the sledge."

"Ready!" exclaimed the white man. "Good. Must hurry. I forgot. How much farther?"

He set his powerful shoulder to the up-standers and the sledge moved. Telekoteah's eighteen-foot whip-lash cracked about the ears of the dogs. The two half-tamed creatures sprang erratically forward.

"*Huk! huk!*" urged the Eskimo. "Go on, Kashoo, you lazy brute! About a sleep farther," he replied to the white man. "It is a pity we had to dodge the bear; it lost us half a sleep's distance. It is quite a sleep further, if we can pass the open water. If the tide is running we shall have to wait still longer. *Huk! Huk! Kashoo!*"

In Arctic Moonlight

"*Huk! Huk!*" echoed the white man.
"Must go fast. I same as dog. See!"

He hitched a spare trace to the runner and plodded onward, pulling with the team. On the other side Kywingwa took another trace. The boy's hand was yet glowing with Kabluna-suah's grasp, and in his heart was a still warmer glow.

"He took my hand," thought Kywingwa. "He never did that with any other Eskimo. He likes me. I would give my life for him."

"Come, come, Kywingwa," exclaimed the gruff Telekoteah, "you are letting your trace hang loose. Pull!"

Kywingwa felt the blood surging in his cheeks. He glanced at Kabluna-suah timidly, but the white man was smiling; Kywingwa saw his white teeth flash in the moonlight. The boy straightened his trace so sharply that it twanged.

"Perhaps a relief party has come from the great-wooden-hut-at-the-south," suggested Telekoteah.

"No," responded the white man. "We not come to the wooden *igloo* yesterday. Therefore, relief party started yesterday.

Laughter of the Sphinx

Great leader promised. From the wooden *igloo* to camp is a journey of three sleeps. Great leader at camp two sleeps after now. Camp will be all frozen. Friends sleep forever. No fire, no food. We bring fire, food. *Toihoi!*"

The sledge moved but slowly, however. In the intense cold the snow lost its slipperiness, and turned dry and shifty, like sand. The dogs scrambled and labored and shirked. Whenever the sledge ran against a mound they sat down, refusing to pull until the load had been started and Telekoteah's redoubtable whip-lash was hurtling about their ears.

On they prodded, in the midst of a silence so nearly absolute that the scrunching of their footsteps re-echoed, as it seemed, from the cliffs half a sleep's journey behind them. Their long, dim shadows, at first stretching away and away before them, gradually moved till they lay to the right. By and by the moon in full circle emerged from behind the lofty promontory that marked the northern end of the sound. The whole expanse of ice was alight.

Dividing it down the middle ran a band

In Arctic Moonlight

considerably darker than the white fields. Extending straight away to the north it tapered to a point beneath the moon at the horizon.

"There is the channel," said Telekoteah, "and the tide is just full. We shall not cross before the ebb begins. *Angoshuce ta-ay!* I think I hear it now."

The ice-field beneath them was shuddering. The vibration increased till it became a rumble; the rumble grew to be a roar. The dark band began perceptibly to move towards the south. The midst of its shadow sparkled with short flashes, some dim, some bright. As the party drew nearer to it the noise resolved into two sounds—a succession of crashes so violent that the solid ice-field shook and heaved and cracked; and beneath the crashes an undertone of clatter ever beginning near at hand and rattling away into the distance. The sound was so tremendous that it had the effect of a physical force; to advance toward it was difficult, like marching in the teeth of a wind.

The narrow passage between the solid fields was choked with loose ice. Only here

Laughter of the Sphinx

and there parallelograms and triangles of black water gleamed momentarily; the width and length of the strait was crammed with fragments of icebergs, pans of flat bay ice, masses of rubble, whirling round and round, heaving into piles, turning end over end, darkening the channel with their shadows, flashing out gleams of moonlight from their facets, steadily grinding and crushing their resistless way towards the south. The ocean, twenty sleeps away, was sucking through the sound the upper fourteen feet of water from all the basins, channels, and bays between itself and the great frozen sea north of all known things. Whatever impeded the rush of the tide must burst.

The ice-floes beat against the firm side walls and against each other; jammed across the channel, and received pile after pile of trash overlaid upon them by the heaped-up waters. No jam lasted while you could count your fingers and toes; always the ice in the centre burst up into the air and was instantly hurried away.

The party halted near the brink. Teleko-teah hauled in the strings that drew the furs

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In Arctic Moonlight

close about him, found a comfortable seat upon the seal, and was evidently prepared to be patient until the peaceful time of low water. But the white man advanced to the edge of the channel, and Kywingwa, with his hands pressed hard over his ears, followed.

Conversation was out of the question. The boy alternately watched the resistless forces displayed before him, wondering what spirit was causing such a terrible confusion, and scanned the face of the white man. Presently a large floe, rebounding from the containing wall, crushed its way through the rubble almost to the opposite side of the strait. Kabluna-suah's eyes turned fierce. The floe worked its way to the other edge. The white man returned to the sledge, seized the upstanders, and pushed sledge, Telekoteah, seal, dogs, and all to the very brink.

"He is crazy," thought Kywingwa. "He means to cross."

Telekoteah also understood, for he threw out his arms in protest, and at last planted himself astride the sledge with his heels and

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his spear dug into the ice. But Kywingwa knew how useless his father's strength would be against that of Kabluna-suah, who could throw in a wrestle any two Eskimos together. If Kabluna-suah had gone crazy, they must try to cross. He gazed north, hoping that no suitable floe would approach. Alas! several large ones were grinding along the edge of the strait.

Away to the left, far from the channel, something was moving. Kywingwa sprang upon a block of ice to see better. The thing passed through the shadow of a berg and, changing its course, drew rapidly near.

The boy ran to where his father and the white man were arguing with lips, making sounds unheard.

"The bear, the bear!" cried Kywingwa. His voice, too, was lost, but the motion of his lips told the news. Telekoteah sprang from the sledge and, raising himself on tip-toe, scanned the fields.

A broad floe, immovable in conflicting pressures, rested against the edge of the channel. Kywingwa saw the white man bend his shoulder to the sledge. Another

In Arctic Moonlight

moment and it was rocking upon the unstable ice-pan. Kabluna-suah seized the cringing dogs and tossed them after the sledge. Grasping Telekoteah by the shoulder with one hand, he motioned to Kywingwa with the other to leap upon the floe. The boy gasped, but obeyed. He was aware that somehow his father and the white man had followed, and that the floe, swung away from the brink, was borne in the full fury of the tide. Round and round it whirled, to the right, and to the left. Sick with the rocking and jolting, Kywingwa lost all sense of direction. Hurlled against a large floe, the pan crumpled up almost to his feet. Borne against a jam, it tilted, and sledge, dogs, and men slid in a mass to the edge. The jam burst and the floe righted. Amid the flying blocks of ice Kywingwa saw his father fall into a patch of black water and saw Kabluna-suah stoop to seize him by the hood. At that moment the floe rested against the field and Kywingwa sprang upon solid ice.

For a moment, lying in a heap, he forgot the bear, his companions, even the noise, in the sweet sense of his safety. A blow upon

Laughter of the Sphinx

the foot startled him. The sledge, drawn by two terrified dogs, was slewing past him. The boy looked for his father and Kablunasuah. The white man, with Telekoteah in his arms, was in the act of leaping to the firm ice. He thrust the Eskimo safe across the slush and water and dropped him heavily, but, missing his own footing, he fell with his legs in the water. Before Kywingwa could reach him, however, the white man had swarmed upon the surface and lay panting.

Kywingwa hastened to raise his father. The old Eskimo's head and arms hung limp; his heart beat but feebly. Evidently the evil spirits had entered into him.

"*Angoshuee ta-ay!*" mourned Kywingwa. "What shall we do? In this noise the spirits will never hear a charm-song."

Nevertheless, he lifted Telekoteah's head upon his knee—a matter of some difficulty, for the Eskimo's wet clothing had frozen stiff—and began to sway his own body to and fro, and sing an exorcism to the evil ones:

*"Ai-yi-i-ai-i-ya!
Ai-yi-i-ai-i-yah!"*

In Arctic Moonlight

he sang. He could not hear his own voice; certainly the spirits would not be frightened. Moreover, in spite of his reindeer-skin coat and his bird-skin shirt, he was beginning to be cold. Still there was nothing to do but sing:

*"Ai-yi-e-yi-e-yah!
Ai-yi-e-yi——"*

A shadow fell across his lap. Kabluna-suah stood beside him—upon one foot. The other foot hung from his waist by a piece of harpoon line and the white man supported himself on Telekoteah's lance. Bending over, he held Telekoteah for a moment by the wrist.

Kywingwa pointed interrogatively to the suspended foot, but Kabluna-suah, without replying, signed to him to rise, and, still resting his weight upon the spear, grasped Telekoteah's shoulder and dragged him forward a pace. Something dropped from the uplifted foot and lay, a little dark, frozen sphere, in the white snow.

"Tatingwa!" said the boy. "His foot is crushed. And the camp half a sleep away."

The white man impatiently beckoned for

Laughter of the Sphinx

assistance, and together man and boy dragged the injured Eskimo to the sledge, which had stopped against a mound. They wrapped him in heavy riding furs and lashed him down upon the seal. Kabluna-suah pointed to the traces and Kywingwa mechanically disentangled them and looked about for the whip. It lay twisted about in the snow, near the channel. The boy ran to pick it up.

In the passage the piles and pinnacles were ever marching south. An unusually high floeberg moving from before him left revealed the opposite side of the strait. There, resting her forepaws upon the block of ice, tossing her black nose up and down, stood the bear.

"*Na na na na-ay!*" Kywingwa felt that he was saying it. "*Chimo*, old lady! You followed us, but you dare not cross. But then," he added, "we must have crossed."

He faced the shore. From the moon, at her highest, the light slanted along the edge of a line of cliffs. Their towering façades, almost bared of snow by the furious Arctic winds, showed rugged and brown against the general whiteness. Just opposite, the wall

In Arctic Moonlight

advanced in a bold promontory. To the south the monstrous black shadow of this bluff obliterated the cliffs and the ice for what seemed like a sleep's distance; but far above the shadow, among the stars themselves, gleamed faintly the silvery interior snowcap.

It was towards this promontory that the party had been laying its course. There a white man and two Eskimos awaited food from a white man's *cache* across the sound. It was to sustain them in a journey of three sleeps to the settlement and plenty. If it failed to come they would die.

"If they would come to meet us," thought Kywingwa. "I believe we shall never reach them. My father perhaps frozen and Kabluna-suah hurt—" and here the recollection burst upon Kywingwa that while Kabluna-suah had come to harm, he Kywingwa, had run away.

"I deserted him," thought the boy. "I said I would give my life for him, and I ran away. Kabluna-suah hates cowards. I am a coward. I am worthless."

But presently, with the energy of his race,

Laughter of the Sphinx

he set about thinking of ways to mend the situation.

"I am no coward," he resolved. "I will show Kabluna-suah. I will—yes, I know what ; I will go to the camp and fetch Dokt."

Rejoicing in this bright plan he hastened to the sledge.

Kabluna-suah had bound up his injured foot with furs, and, seated upon the sledge-runner, pressed both hands to his head. As Kywingwa's shadow fell near him the white man looked up, smiled feebly, and rose upon his sound foot. He braced against the up-standers to push, and signed to Kywingwa to crack the whip.

"Kabluna-suah," protested the boy, illustrating his speech with gestures and shouting with all his force, "I will go to the camp and bring Dokt."

The words were lost in the clatter, but Kabluna-suah seemed to understand. He shook his head, however, and with his right hand imitated the flourish of a whip-stock.

With his hopes of retrieving Kabluna-suah's good opinion gone, unhappy and discouraged, Kywingwa started the team. Pro-

In Arctic Moonlight

gress was not rapid. Kabluna-suah, hopping upon his sound foot, pushed against the upstanders. Kywingwa, with a trace in his left hand and the whip in his right, both hauled at the load and directed the dogs. Thus they marched with the constancy of desperation for—Kywingwa never knew how long. The deafening noise of the tide-borne ice lessened away in the distance. Presently Kywingwa could hear his own shouts to the dogs. The shadow of the promontory was at hand. The cliff hung above them.

The sledge ran against a hummock. The dogs ceased to pull, seated themselves, and lolled out their tongues. Kywingwa, exhausted and discouraged, would have liked to rest. He looked questioningly back at Kabluna-suah. The white man was straining to start the sledge.

"Hurry, Kywingwa," he gasped brokenly. "Go on; must go on. Hasten!"

He lurched forward and fell upon the sledge. Kywingwa ran to his aid.

"Let me go to the camp and bring Dokt," he begged. "It is a short journey. Except for the shadow we should see the snow-huts."

Laughter of the Sphinx

"No," gasped the white man. "No! Bear will come. Cross at low tide. Low tide now. Bear come—eat provisions—kill us—friends will starve."

In the act of staggering to his place behind the upstanders he swung his wounded foot against the runner and collapsed on the snow. Kywingwa perceived that the demons had entered into him, too.

"Kabluna-suah! Kabluna-suah!" he called. He chafed with his rough mittens as much of the white man's face as was left uncovered by the hood, shook the heavy shoulders, and called again and again. But the white man's neck refused to stiffen. Kywingwa lifted the broad shoulders to rest against the sledge, and prepared, not confidently, to sing a charm.

The silence was broken by a short, dull noise. Was it a splitting iceberg or a rifle shot? Kywingwa listened as well as he could with his heart pumping the blood against his ear-drums till they seemed ready to burst.

The sound rang out again. Kywingwa drew his knife, slashed off the traces, and gave cry to the dogs.

In Arctic Moonlight

"Get away, Kashoo, get away. *Huk!*
Huk! Get away!"

He sent the long whip-lash at the ear of the leader. A tuft of hair flew up and the dog yelped. A third shot came in reply. Kashoo gave call with his nose in the air, and scampered into the shadow. The other dog followed. Kywingwa ran to the white man.

"Kabluna-suah! Kabluna-suah!" he shouted. "Dokt is coming. They are coming."

The white man's eyes unclosed.

"Good," exulted Kywingwa. "The evil spirits fear Dokt. They have gone."

Kabluna-suah's lips moved. Kywingwa bent his ear.

"The bear," whispered the white man.

"The bear."

"Dokt is coming, Kabluna-suah," repeated Kywingwa. "Dokt is almost here."

"The bear," feebly insisted the white man.

"I hear him—bear——"

"There is no bear," said Kywingwa.

Nevertheless, impressed with the fainting man's earnestness, he scanned the white wastes.

Laughter of the Sphinx

The shadow in the sledge-track traced a faint trail out into the distance. It ended in something that moved. Kywingwa ran forward a few paces. Though he could not make out the creature's outlines, he knew that there was only one living thing abroad on the ice.

"Dokt! oh, Dokt! Come! Come!"

The echoes of his cry returned to Kywingwa from the cliffs. No other sound broke the silence. The bear, in plain sight, ceased to nose along the trail and broke into a gallop.

"Dokt! Do-o-okt!" Surely he heard a reply—was it an echo? The bear was almost at hand; he could see the black tip of her nose.

"Dokt!" he cried once more, and then, being but a boy, he burst into tears and turned to run.

He ran almost into the arms of Kablunasuah. The white man was standing, as Kywingwa noticed even in his surprise, firmly on both feet. He had abandoned the lance, but holding the rifle by the barrel he brandished it over his shoulder. Kywingwa's panic

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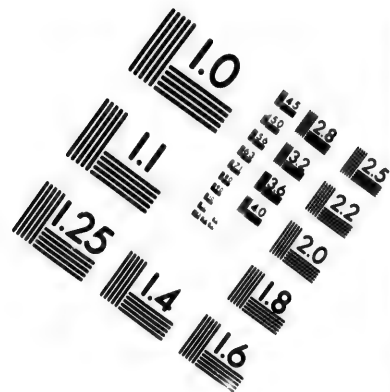
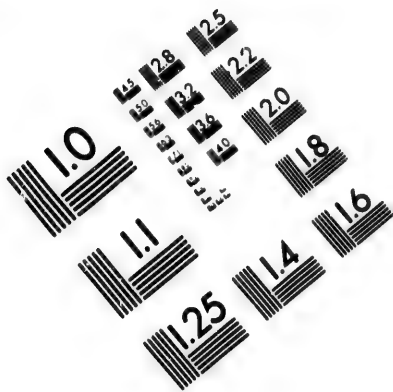
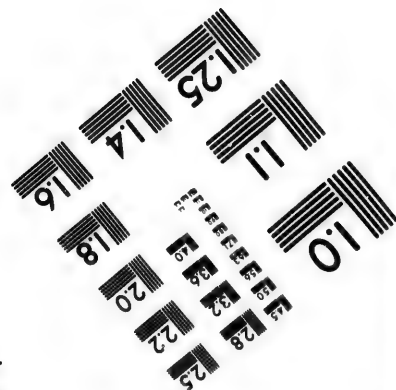
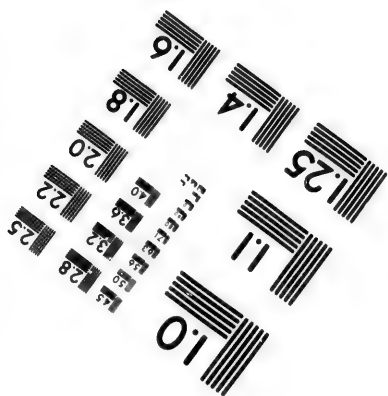
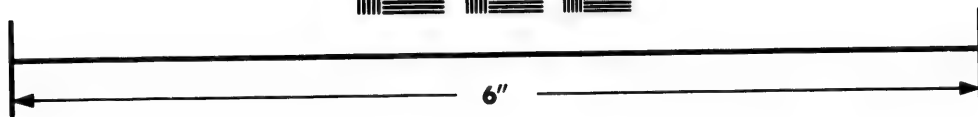
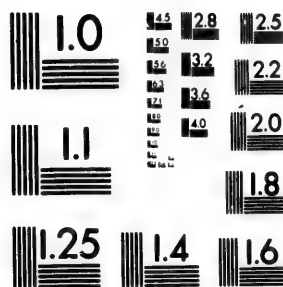


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He thrust his weapon into the brute's shoulder.



In Arctic Moonlight

was partially stilled. He picked up the spear and ranged himself by the white man's side.

As the bear drew near she slackened her gallop into a trot; then paused. For a moment, snarling suspiciously, she glared at her opponents. Kywingwa brandished the spear and she took a step forward. The white man, already tottering, swung his weapon uselessly and fell with the force of his own blow. The bear charged upon him. Kywingwa sprang to the right, levelled his lance, and sobbing out his rage and desperation in a fierce "*A-a-a-ah!*" he thrust his weapon into the brute's shoulder.

The bear turned from Kabluna-suah, splintered the spear with a blow of her paw, and rushed toward her latest enemy.

With hunched-up shoulders and head down, certain that in a moment he should feel the claws on his back, the boy sped away. He heard behind him the shuffling of the bear's feet in the snow; the animal's snarls filled the air. Kywingwa's breath began to come in hot gasps; his feet had turned to iron-stone. The snarling drew nearer—his knees were giving way—the

Laughter of the Sphinx

noise was deafening. Kywingwa had never before heard a bear bark, yet this one was barking.

The boy's legs refused to carry him another step, and he fell to his hands and knees. He was aware that the snarling suddenly ceased; the bear must be ready to strike. Kywingwa covered his face with his hands.

Something dashed by him, blowing his long hair away from his hands with the wind of its rapid passage. He uncovered his face. A shadow was fleeting by; another followed, and another.

The gloom of the great cliff fell across the snow not twenty paces away. Behind the edge the darkness intensified in one spot, the spot moved towards him, detached itself from the mass, swept across the light space and passed over him, as a wave surges over a reef in the bay.

It was a pack of dogs. Grimly silent except for their panting and the rush of their feet, with wolfish heads low and furred tails straight, they leaped across the snow to where the bear, brought to bay by the leaders, stood reared upon her haunches.

In Arctic Moonlight

At her feet the pack burst. A wild horde sprang hither and thither, darting at the bear's hind quarters and springing away, galloping round the quarry in a confusing circle. Every dog of them was giving tongue at the utmost pitch of his voice, and the air vibrated with the noise.

Even then Kywingwa, stupefied with his exertions, but half comprehended the scene. But presently more shadows arrived; the shadows of men. Kywingwa's brother, afterwards Dokt, and with him a very lofty figure, the great Captain of all the white men from the wooden-*igloo*-at-the-south. The relief party had come after all.

The white men ran to the sledge. Kywingwa's brother raised the lad from the snow and helped him to make a slow way after them. Before they reached the party some one fired a rifle and the bear fell among a heap of dogs.

Kabluna-suah, supported by the leader, was drinking Dokt's charm-medicine out of the round box made of ice that did not melt. Presently Kywingwa heard his voice; the tones were low and the white men bent their

Laughter of the Sphinx

heads to catch the words. Kywingwa could not understand them.

In a moment Dokt straightened up and called his name loudly.

"Kywingwa," he cried. "Where is Kywingwa?" His voice sounded strained and Kywingwa was frightened.

"Here," he answered feebly. "I couldn't help running away, I——"

But Dokt seized him by the shoulders and knees, tossed him into the air, caught him on the way down, and squeezed his breath almost away. Kywingwa noticed frozen drops on the white man's cheeks. He must have been running fast if his eyes watered.

The boy understood dimly from the ways of the white people that he was not in disgrace. But he was surprised when they began to give him things—priceless pieces of wood, knives, hatchets, and even a rifle. Why these gifts should be lavished upon him Kywingwa could not ascertain; at last he contented himself with the recollection that the white man is an amiable creature, but odd, very odd.

THE DOLOROUS EXPERIENCE OF KUKU

TOOKAMINGWA visited in the village where Kuku lived, and Kuku fell in love with her. Her cheeks were plump and brown, her dark eyes glowed as glow peat fires when the wind blows, and her teeth were the daintiest and whitest in Greenland. Kuku, himself, was not homely for an Eskimo, but he was not proud of that. He exulted because he was a skilful maker of harpoons and of sledges, and because he was the most distinguished hunter among the younger men in the tribe. Recently he had performed the surprising feat of killing a reindeer with his bow and arrow, and he gave some of the reindeer tallow to Tookamingwa, and fancied that she looked upon him with favor.

To be sure she talked a good deal about the people with white faces who lived in their great *igloo* three sleeps to the northward.

Laughter of the Sphinx

"They are rich," said the maiden. "The *igloo* is built of wood! and they have enough iron tools to fit out all the Eskimos in the world! They are kind, too. They give you valuable things. See! This is what Kabluna-suah gave me. When we go back to pitch our *tupiks* for the summer near the white people, he will give more."

She exhibited a curious pot made of a shiny substance.

"It held red stuff that was not seal's blood, yet the white people ate it. They named it tomat," said Tookamingwa. "It was not good food. The pot is good, though; better than soapstone. It will not break. See!"

She cast it upon a hard piece of ice. The surface was dented but not cracked.

"*Ai-o!*" exclaimed Kuku, and his heart sank. Why should this person with the name that meant "great big white man" make precious gifts to an Eskimo girl?

When the time came for Eskimos to choose their summer homes he had an interview with Tooky's parents. It was satisfactory, for the girl being twelve suns old, was ready

The Dolorous Experience of Kuku

for marriage, and her father was glad to turn over to another hunter the task of killing seals for her food. He promised that Tookamingwa should be Kuku's wife, and the lover was therefore not disheartened when, upon her departure to white man's *igloo*, his sweetheart refused to sniff noses with him in secret.

But, when Tookamingwa, her parents, the sledge and the team of dogs were combined in a tiny black spot far away upon the white ice, Kuku's spirits fell. His beloved was going to be not only away from him but also in the company of Kabluna-suah. The white man must be in love with Tooky; who could see her and not be? He was rich; suppose he should offer her mother a pair of scissors and her father a knife! Kuku was aware that, tempted with such presents, not for an instant would his prospective parents-in-law remember their promise to an Eskimo who had only a poor knife of his own, not to speak of a bright new one to give away.

By sunset the lad was miserable. His spirits were not lightened by the conversation of a family that passed the night in his

Laughter of the Sphinx

father's *igloo*. They had lived near the white people ever since the sun had come back after its winter's absence. They would talk of nothing but the strangers. If Kuku's father asked who in the northern villages had caught the most walrus, they burst out into the story of a single hunt when the white men had taken ten walrus with fire-weapons that made a great noise. If Kuku's mother asked whether Itoo-sak-suee's baby had been born, they explained that a white man, Kabluna-suah, had held beneath Itoo-sak-suee's nostrils a little pot, made of something that looked like ice, and had driven the pain-spirits away.

"Their ways are not the ways of Innuits," said the aged father of the family. "Kabluna-suah made a charm-dish of hot water, and placed the new-born baby in it, and the baby is strong. It is well for the Innuits that Kabluna-suah has come here. It will be well for Tookamingwa, to whom he has given gifts, if he shall take her to Mehica, where he lives, in the great woman's boat that sends up smoke."

Kuku crawled hastily through the long

The Dolorous Experience of Kuku

hole that led out of the *igloo*. Although he had dreaded vaguely lest Kabluna-suah might be a rival, he was unprepared to have his fears confirmed. He stood upon a hill overlooking the bay, and despair came upon him.

In the gray twilight which answered at that season of the year for night, the great white mountains and the infinite expanse of white ice-fields, unrelieved by a touch of black, nay, by the lightest shadow, were oppressively desolate. Only in the southeast was there a bit of color; there a faint tinge of pink in the clouds betokened the approach of dawn. The sun had shone long that day; on the morrow he would shine longer still, and presently the time would come when he would not set at all, but would swing around and around the sky. Then the weather would be warm, and the snow on the sea-shore and in the valleys would melt, and the flowers and grass would grow, and the birds would come back and bumblebees and butterflies would play, and life would be joyous in the land. But the ice-fields would break up and float away, and there would be no

Laughter of the Sphinx

travelling for Eskimos, and Kuku would be shut off from Tookamingwa until in the fall the ice should form thick enough to bear a sledge. But white people with their great woman's boats, could come and go at will. Suppose Kabluna-suah should be in earnest; suppose he really should take Tookamingwa away to Mehika.

Kuku hastened to his sledge, packed upon it his weapons, his seal-skin tent, some furs and some seal-meat, harnessed his five dogs, sent the long whip-lash whirring about their ears and started off for white man's *igloo*.

Just after sunset of the third day, he came in sight of the snow-mound under which lay the house of wood. Even though he had been told of its greatness, he was surprised, and a little awe-stricken; the mound was almost as large as a small hill. The tallest of the Eskimo *igloos* nearby was not a third as high. He urged forward his dogs and arrived before the opening of the passage that led through the heap of snow into the abode of the white people. Having tethered the team he hastened to the entrance. Barely noting, in his excitement, that the passage

The Dolorous Experience of Kuku

was so high that you could stand erect in it, he hurried through the darkness till he came, thump, against a hard wall. While he was yet dazed from the shock, part of the wall seemed to fall away, a radiance burst upon him, and he staggered into a bewildering scene.

The place was vast, but light as day. In it were many, many people, talking and laughing, evidently undisturbed by the accident to the wall. Most of them were Eskimos, but in a moment from the crowd came a being with a white face, clad in strange, soft garb; another followed him, and then another, and afterward others; Kuku could not say how many, for they came and went, and each one looked to him exactly like the others. They took hold of his hand in an extraordinary way, and spoke to him kindly in bad Eskimo.

Contrary to their custom the Eskimos also came to bid him welcome, but among them was not Tookamingwa. He became conscious of this after a while, and wondered where she was. Presently the crowd fell away from him and he saw her. She was sitting at

Laughter of the Sphinx

the other side of the *igloo*, upon an odd thing, somewhat like the stools used by Eskimos in watching at holes in the ice for seals, and she was chattering to a white man. He was very tall. Even as he sat his head was nearly upon a level with that of Kuku, who was standing. His hair did not hang over his shoulders, but was cut short. Kuku wondered how he protected his face in winter when the winds blew. He wore bearskin breeches and Eskimo boots, but instead of a *netcha* he had a soft garment not made of skins. He was talking merrily with Tooky. Evidently he understood what she said, but could not express himself easily, for he used signs.

"Kabluna-suah!" called some one from across the *igloo*. "Kabluna-suah, *agai!* *Takoo oona!*"

The white man looked up, said a word to Tookamingwa and went away. Kuku approached the maiden.

"Tooky," he said softly.

She appeared not to hear; she was watching the lofty figure of the white man, conspicuous in the throng of Eskimos.

"Tooky," repeated Kuku.

The Dolorous Experience of Kuku

Tookamingwa turned her head slowly and looked at him. Then without a sign of recognition, she rose from the stool and went away. "Tooky," murmured Kuku, piteously, but she made no answer. Dumfounded, he took a seat upon the floor in a corner and pulled his hood over his head.

His gloom was broken through by a loud hail.

"Hi, Kuku. Why do you sit alone? Come and play the pulling game."

The voice was that of Koolatingwa, the foolish, and Kuku was displeased.

"Go away!" he said.

"*Tatingwa!* What spirit is in you?" responded Koolatingwa. "Come out of that corner and pull with Kabluna-suah."

His voice was loud. Kuku felt that the attention of everyone had been called to him. In the presence of Tookamingwa it would never do to refuse the challenge, and he arose and took his place in the open space at the centre of the room. But once there he gained confidence. At the pulling game he was an expert. Suppose he should van-

Laughter of the Sphinx

quish Kabluna-suah ; then, he thought, Tooky would perhaps look at him.

The white man, coming forward, smiled, and Kuku saw that his eyes were not brown, like Eskimo eyes, but blue, and looked kindly. The contestants stretched forth their right arms, with wrists bent at right angles, locked wrists, bracing themselves firmly, and at a signal from Koolatingwa began to pull. Kuku had taken an excellent position with his body thrown well back, and his arm crooked at the elbow, so that the interlocked wrists were a little nearer to him than they were to Kabluna-suah. The white man, on the contrary, held himself nearly upright, apparently careless about advantage of posture. But when the word came, Kuku found himself drawn forward irresistibly ; his struggles were of no avail ; he pitched toward Kabluna-suah with so great momentum that he almost lost his balance.

The other Eskimos laughed, but the white man grasped Kuku's hand, after the strange manner of white men, led him away from the crowd and talked to him.

"You strong. You pull good," he said.

The Dolorous Experience of Kuku

"You pull very good. They no good," he added, smiling and pointing to the laughing Eskimos. And he went on to ask Kuku about his dogs, and the Eskimo partly forgot his unhappiness in describing his king-dog, and in admiring the knife which Kab-luna-suah gave him.

By-and-by the Eskimos went out and Kuku saw that he was expected to follow. It was only after he had left the *igloo* that he realized how little he had hated the white man.

"I do not wonder that Tooky likes him," he murmured to himself. "He is *pe-oo-ook!*"

Just outside the passage he was startled. Tookamingwa stood there looking out over the dreary ice-fields. Could she be waiting for him? He approached her timidly and pronounced her name. The maiden turned upon him vehemently, and her eyes glowed more than ever.

"Why did you not pull him over?" she exclaimed. "You are good for nothing! I despise you. I will not speak to you!" And she ran to her father's *igloo*, leaving Kuku once more overwhelmed with despair.

Laughter of the Sphinx

Thereafter, for many sleeps, Kuku suffered. In Tookamingwa's presence he was wretched, because she never took the slightest notice of him; but even that he preferred to the uncertainty and jealousy he felt when she was out of his sight. So he followed her about and became more and more listless. He was derided by most of the Eskimos, but much pitied by some. He told the whole story, after a long time, to the aged Miktoushá, who had asked him why he no longer hunted reindeer.

"Youth is foolish," commented Miktoushá, when the story was ended. "You are a hunter, but you do not know when you have trapped your fox. The maiden is yours. She is struggling in the trap. Leave her free, and she will come where you can seize her."

"She will go to Mehica with Kablun-suah," said Kuku.

The old hunter shook his head.

"*Na!*" he replied. "The white men are wise. They have white women. They will not need the Innuít maidens in their own land. *Takoo*," he went on. "Hunt again. Kill a reindeer, and give the skin to another

The Dolorous Experience of Kuku

maiden. Give it to Padlungwa. Tookamingwa will be enraged, but she will come the sooner to your *igloo*."

Kuku sallied forth into a gap in the hills. Reindeer were shy in the neighborhood of white man's *igloo*, because so many of their comrades had been killed. It was with great difficulty that Kuku succeeded in shooting one; and for that reason he was doubly triumphant as he bore his prey into the settlement and was hailed with applause. Padlungwa was among the rest of the Eskimos, and showed her white teeth, but Kuku's intention of giving her the skin had vanished. With success his confidence had returned. He watched for two or three sleeps till he saw an opportunity to address Tookamingwa by herself and then offered her the soft, rare fur. Tooky's eyes brightened, and she put forth her hand, but at that moment Koolatingwa appeared near by and laughed. Tookamingwa's hand fell to her side, her face became expressionless, and she turned away.

"Tooky, Tooky," said Kuku, "have pity. I am unhappy. You are dear to me, Tooky; you are dear to me, but you are not kind."

Laughter of the Sphinx

She paused; she did not turn around, but her head drooped. Koolatingwa stopped laughing and gazed, open-mouthed.

"Tooky," continued Kuku, softly. "I give you the fur. See, I leave it behind you on the stone."

She was trembling. Kuku's heart was warm with delight. With shrieks and whoops of malignant glee Koolatingwa bounded towards white man's *igloo*. The interview came to an end. Tookamingwa drew herself up, marched haughtily away and disappeared within her father's house.

"She will come to my *igloo*," exulted Kuku, left alone. "I am sure of it. The skin shall lie where it is; she will come and get it."

And when, after sleeping, he passed the spot again, the rock was bare, he knew she only would have taken the fur, for Eskimos do not steal. Therefore Kuku was consoled, though his sweetheart still continued to pass him without notice, and though, moreover, he had to submit to the chaff of the other Eskimos, to whom Koolatingwa

The Dolorous Experience of Kuku

had explained the situation in that vivid descriptive way which was his.

The sun rose above the horizon, not to set again for many sleeps. The weather grew hot; the Eskimos pitched their skin tents, laid aside their thick fox and rabbit skins and donned garments of seal. Lanes of black water opened out at the end of the bay toward the sea, and upon the edges of these lanes slept seal. The Eskimos went hunting. At length a lane appeared in the bay itself and the Eskimos launched their *kayaks* and paddled to and from the hunting grounds. Kuku sold his dogs to the white men for wood enough for the framework of a *kayak*, killed adroitly ten seals, tanned their skins and built one of the little boats, the first he had ever owned. When it was finished and lay drying in the sunlight, Tookamingwa sauntered near it. Kuku, perceiving her from afar, was delighted. Recently he had seen but little of Tooky because of the hunting.

"She will come to my *igloo*!" he said to himself. "She comes to look at my *kayak*."

Laughter of the Sphinx

Its first service shall be for her. I will kill a harbor seal and she shall have a fine pair of trousers out of the skin."

"Kuku," said a taunting voice behind him. "Kuku, have you talked with Tooky lately?"

Kuku turned. "Koolatingwa," he said, "if you do not let me alone, I will drive my lance through you."

Koolatingwa drew back in amazement and fright. Such a threat from an Eskimo was unheard of.

"I meant no harm," he stammered. "But I warn you that Kabluna-suah is saying that soon a great woman's boat will come from Mehica and that Tooky is going away in it."

"*Shagloo iblee!*" burst forth Kuku, "you lie! you lie! you lie!" He caught up a stone, but Koolatingwa fled incontinently.

"*Shagloo na-me!*" he called back, when he was well out of range. "Look yonder."

Kuku looked. Beside Tookamingwa stood Kabluna-suah. He talked to Tooky and she raised her eyes trustfully to his and laughed. Kuku dashed down the beach, burst between the two figures and seized the *kayak*.

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The Dolorous Experience of Kuku

mine! You need not look at it, Kabluna-suah! You cannot take it with Tookamingwa in the woman's boat!"

He pushed his little boat down to the ice, slid it out to the water, launched it and squeezed himself into the cockpit. He heard Kabluna-suah calling his name; to that he paid not the slightest attention, but paddled furiously and never looked behind him. Down the long lane of black water he proceeded, passing the white man's wooden boat, which was just coming in, passing Eskimos in their canoes, at last passing out of the bay altogether, far out into the open sea, dotted with white ice-floes. Where he went he cared not, but the *kayak* determined his course. He was not accustomed to paddling, and one of his strokes upon the right side was too vigorous. Immediately the canoe began to describe a circle to the left. In vain he tried to correct the movement by strokes upon the inner side of the circle; the self-willed little craft refused to be coerced, and he was forced to sink the right blade of his paddle into the water, and to hold hard till she stopped. Before him was an ice-floe,

Laughter of the Sphinx

upon which he had narrowly escaped being wrecked.

A huge yellow mass moved upon the ice-floe. It came lumbering down to the edge of the water and stood, tossing a head and neck up and down, sniffing in the air with a black muzzle, and staring curiously with small, black eyes at the strange being that had come into its kingdom. From behind its legs came a copy of itself in miniature, and stood in front and imitated its mother in gestures.

No Eskimo in his senses dreams of attacking a bear without dogs, but Kuku was not in his senses.

"Welcome!" he exclaimed. "You have come to your death. I will kill you, *nannook*, and your skin shall go to Tookamingwa. I will give her something better than any gift of the white man."

He tore his harpoon out of the fastenings and tied to the end of the line a drag; a square bone frame with tanned sealskin stretched tightly across it. "Bears are cowards till they are forced to fight," he reflected. "I will fasten to the old one with

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The Dolorous Experience of Kuku

the harpoon; at the pain she will take the cub and run. She will try to swim to the shore ice, but she will not be able to pull the drag, and I can paddle near her and kill her with the lance."

It was a perilous plan, but it might have succeeded if the cub had not been brimming over with curiosity. Just as Kuku delivered his harpoon, the little beast rose on his hind legs, to see better, received the weapon full in the throat and fell with a howl. Instantly Kuku, knowing his peril, took to flight. The mother nosed about her baby, whined piteously and licked the wound. Then raising her enormous head, she glared for a minute at the fleeing Eskimo, and, snarling, plunged into the water. Kuku paddled with the strength of fear, and he might have escaped had not a small piece of ice, alongside of which he ran, forced him to lose two strokes on the left. Instantly the *kayak* began to describe a circle and the bear cut across and was upon him. An ice-floe was at hand. Instinctively Kuku threw away his paddle, lifted himself out of the little cockpit, drew his feet under him and grasped his

Laughter of the Sphinx

lance. A huge paw came out of the water and fell upon the stern of the *kayak*. Down it went, and up rose the bow. Kuku sprang for his life, alighted on the side of a little hillock upon the ice-floe, and fell with a crash.

He felt a thrill of pain in his left leg, and when he tried to rise, found he was disabled. Fortunately the bear occupied herself for a few moments in demolishing the *kayak*. Meanwhile, in spite of his pain, Kuku was able to draw himself back from the edge of the ice. He hoped to find a hiding place over behind a large mound in the centre of the pan, but just before he reached the summit his strength gave out.

The world became unreal. A visionary monster seemed to be plunging about in the water. Kuku watched it, half unbelieving, as he had sometimes watched the spirits that appear to Eskimos when the *angekok* sings charm-songs. Even when the brute left the ruins of the *kayak* and began to clamber upon the ice, Kuku had no dread of it. He felt that he ought to rise and fight, and he made one attempt to drag himself up, but

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The Dolorous Experience of Kuku

agony in his leg took away his breath, and he sank back. The bear pulled herself upon the floe. Kuku watched her calmly and wondered whether it was really a dream. After a long time he was aware that she had paused and seemed to be snarling at something beyond him. Kuku heard strange noises—two or three sharp whistles in the air above his head, and several little thudding sounds that seemed to come from the bear herself. She behaved oddly. She rose upon her hind legs, made a few aimless clutches with her forepaws, fell and lay struggling. A red stain spread wider and wider over the ice. While Kuku was trying to understand this, out of the ice beside him rose a dark figure, and then the vision turned to the face of Kabluna-suah close to his own.

Kuku felt himself saying:

"Little bear—yonder—I killed it—give Tookamingwa," and then someone seized his leg, and at the pain the face and the world vanished.

When he awoke he was very weak, but in possession of his senses. He found himself lying in white man's *igloo*, on something soft,

Laughter of the Sphinx

in one of those places where the white people slept. His right leg felt stiff and queer, and he could not move it. He felt it, and found that it was tied to something that seemed to be wood.

From somewhere out in the *igloo* came Kabluna-suah and looked at him.

"Good, Kuku?" inquired the white man, gently.

"Good," assented Kuku, feebly. "Tookamingwa?"

At this Kabluna-suah went away, and Kuku fell to wondering hazily whether the oomiah-suah had come yet, and when it would go back to Mehica and take Tooky away from him. Footsteps approached and he turned his head. Kabluna-suah came in, and by the hand he led Tookamingwa. He left her at Kuku's side and disappeared, and all Kuku could see was his sweetheart's bright eyes shining through the dusk of the *igloo*. Nearer and nearer they came—she was bending over him.

"Kuku," she murmured.

Kuku's soul swelled in his enfeebled body,

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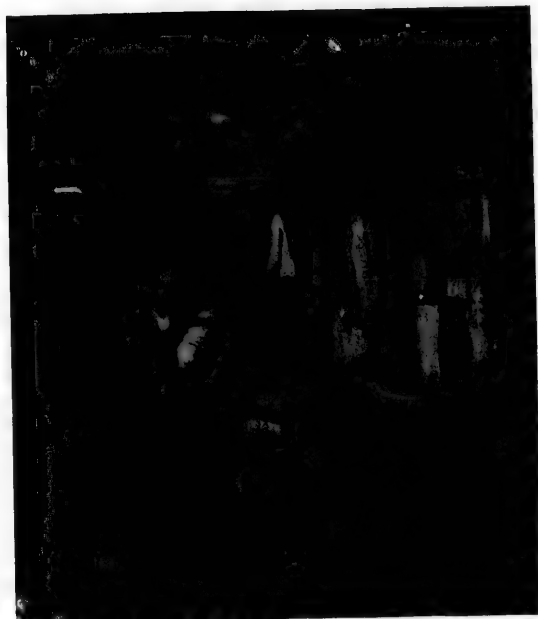
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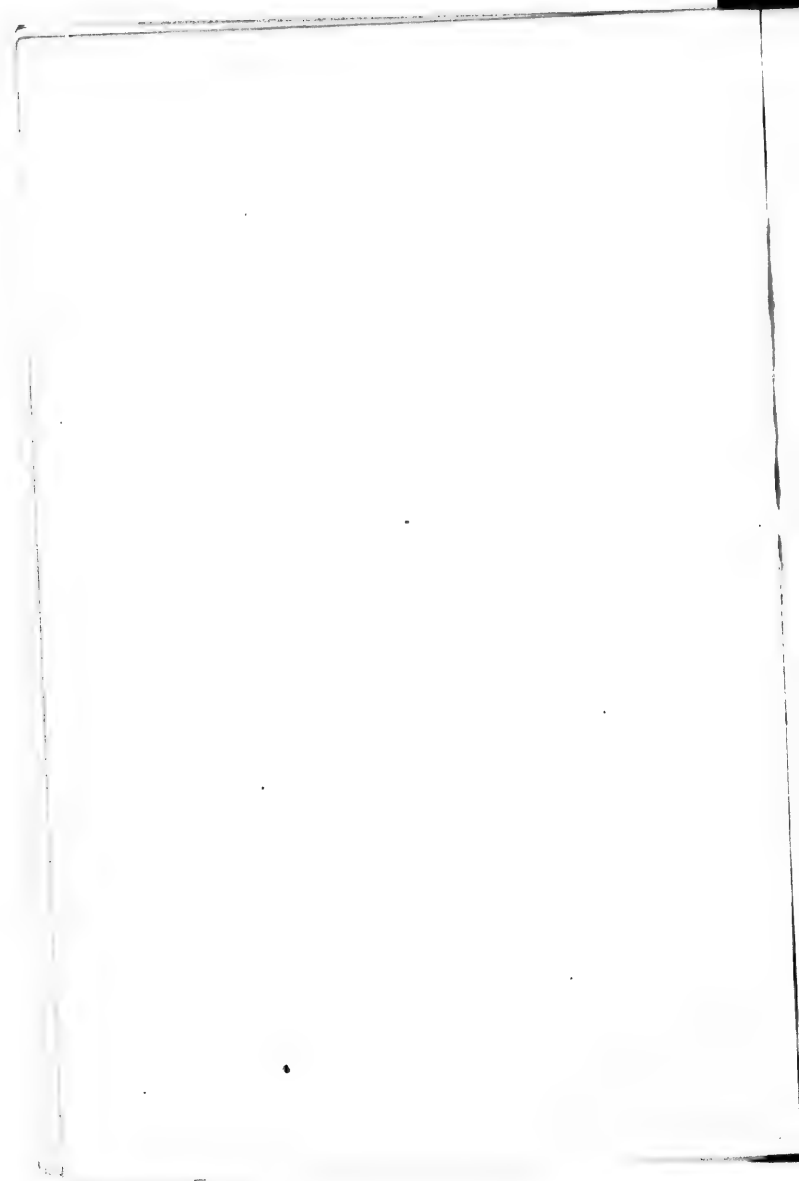
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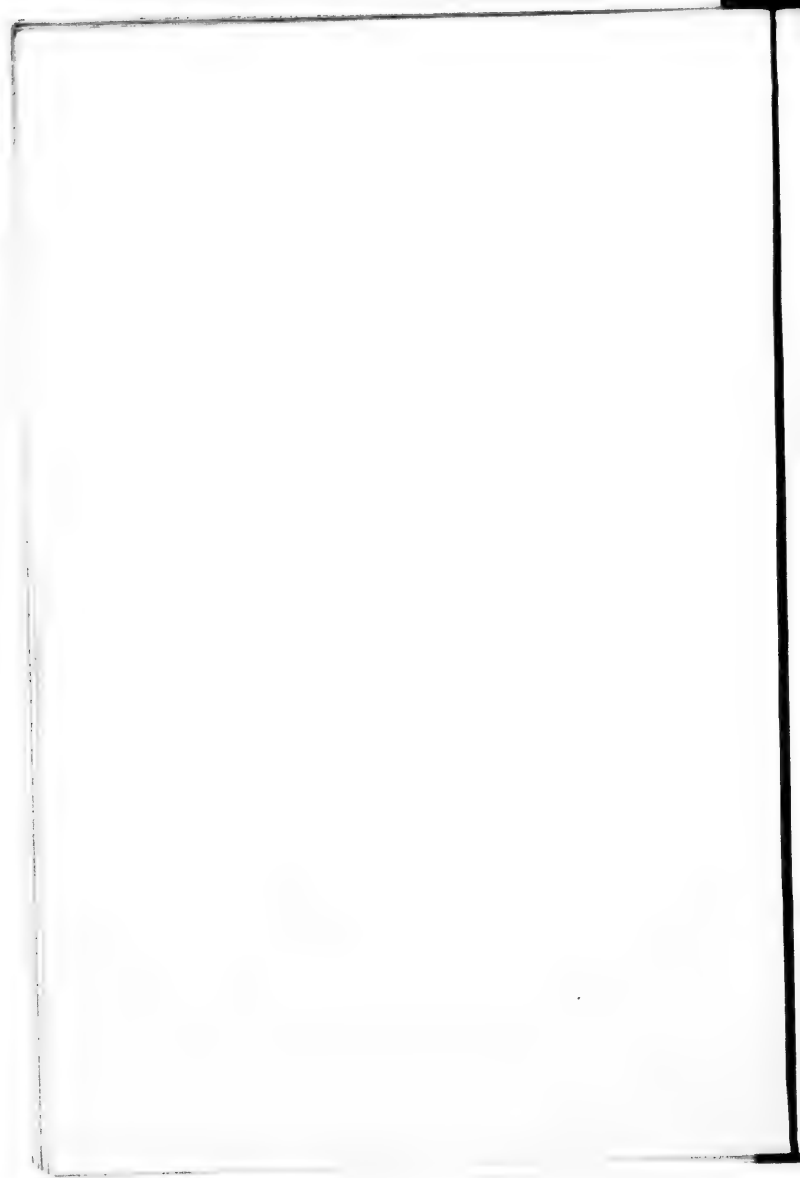


She was bending over him.



The Dolorous Experience of Kuku

and he burst forth into tears, fit for white men only. For he saw that forever and ever, even among the stars, Tookamingwa would sniff noses with him in happiness.



A TALE OF DARKNESS AND OF THE COLD

KALUTANAH, strongest Eskimo in North Greenland, ate some white man's food and was seized by a pain-spirit. He pressed both hands upon the spirit without effect, and sent his wife to fetch an *angedkok*. The wise man arrived with his little oval tambourine, made of walrus membrane stretched upon a reindeer-rib frame, took his stand beside Kalutanah and began to twist his body from side to side and to sing a charm-song. In his left hand he grasped the tambourine; in his right the ivory wand; and, beating triple taps upon the resounding frame, he lifted his voice mournfully.

*"Ai, yi-i, yi-i, yah !
Ai, yi-i, yi-i, yah !"*

he chanted. But the devils in Kalutanah's inside never budged.

Laughter of the Sphinx

Louder and louder rose the song, faster and faster twisted the *angekok's* body. His long black hair slashed across his face, his eyes rolled up and looked like white moons.

Kalutanah groaned. The *angekok* went into a frenzy and his wail waxed to a howl and sounded beyond the stone hut, down the hill, and out over the shimmering ice-fields to the ship where the white men lived.

The white man with red whiskers came to ask the cause.

"Much noise," he said in his imperfect Eskimo. "Why?"

Kalutanah was too weak to answer, and the *angekok* lay prostrated with the spasm. Padlungwa had to break through her shyness.

"Kalutanah has an *ah-ah*," she said. "He ate some of your red food from the round boxy that gleams. You say tomat? White man's food is not good for Eskimos. My husband has an *ah-ah*."

The white man pressed his palm upon Kalutanah's forehead.

"Hm!" he commented, "you fetch clothes."

Together they slipped winter furs upon

El Tale of Darkness and of the Cold

Kalutanah, and the white man dragged him through the long, cramped tunnel out of the *igloo*, and bore him over the moonlit ice-fields to the ship. There, lying beside one of the great iron lamps that burn black stones, Kalutanah drank some nasty stuff, whereupon the devils flew away and left him to sleep.

When he awoke the white man and Padlungwa were watching. Padlungwa cooed over him, in her soft voice, but in the time of his illness she had changed.

Her pretty timidity was gone. She had ceased to fear the white men. She asked them questions; she even ventured to make jokes with the red beard. When Kalutanah, recovered after a few sleeps, beckoned his wife to go home he found her pettish.

"It is good to be here," she remonstrated. "Why should we go to live in the *igloo*; it is so small."

"It is too small for us and the white man," muttered Kalutanah. "Come."

Padlungwa followed him. But as the winter waned and the sunlight began again to illumine the white world she was often

Laughter of the Sphinx

absent from the *igloo*. She brought home precious gifts from the white men—pieces of wood and needles, and once a knife. She had bright stories, too, about the strangers; how funny and green they looked, after the long winter night; how they came from a wonderful land where the sun always rose and set once every sleep, as it does in Eskimo land during the spring and fall, and how they meant to go home as soon as the ice should break up.

"And they say," ventured Padlungwa, one late spring day, "that they will take you and me with them."

Kalutanah harnessed his dogs to the sledge, packed his harpoon, lance, knife and riding furs, together with twelve sleeps' supply of seal-meat.

"Padlungwa," he called. "Come with me. "We will bring my walrus from the *cache* at Netchiuloomee."

Before the twelve sleeps had passed the ice out at sea, yielding to the power of sun and tide, had broken up. Kalutanah returned from Netchiuloomee alone. Padlungwa, he said, had fallen into a crack and

A Tale of Darkness and of the Cold

Kokoia, the sea-devil, had choked her. He was haggard and his eyes roved wildly.

The white men, still ice-bound in the bay, stroked his shoulders and slapped his back, just as if he had been one of their own company come to grief. But the Eskimos in the settlement upon the hill lost the red from their cheeks as they heard Kalutanah's story.

"Why did he take her among the broken sea-ice?" they gossiped. "The bays are still frozen. He could have reached Netchiu-loomee without crossing dangerous cracks."

"His father's father was one of the tattooed tribe," ventured a woman.

The Eskimos exchanged rapid glances. Once or twice, in the youth of the old men, there had come across the frozen sea to the westward, bands of tall Eskimos with cheeks and lips tattooed. They had killed men, ravished women and stolen the food of the settlements. Kalutanah's father, it was said, had been tall and valiant like these men. Kalutanah, himself, was greater by a whole head than anyone in his tribe.

Among the gentle Greenland people a murder—nay, a quarrel—was unknown. But

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if Kalutanah had the fierce blood of the tattooed men from the western land, who could say what he might do?

The Eskimos discussed these things in groups, casting over their shoulders glances at Kalutanah. In his presence they were uneasy. No one sought him out, and it came gradually to pass that if he joined a group of his old-time friends—and blood relatives, for this isolated tribe of two hundred and fifty persons is a great family—one and another withdrew to sharpen a harpoon or to look after the tanning of a sealskin. At last, in the midst of the lively settlement, Kalutanah found himself solitary.

Solitude among the Arctic solitudes is blank desolation. There is nothing to relieve it. For the lofty cliffs and pure snows, for the blue waves, dancing in the sunlight, for the sprays flashing against a thousand shining icebergs, the Eskimo has no conscious love. His happiness is in hunting and gathering with his people to gossip, or to thrill before some *angekok* holding communion with the spirits. He needs his fellow-men. Kalutanah particularly needed them.

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He was arrogant in his strength. He loved the admiration it brought him. When the admiration failed he had no resource left. At first, upheld by pride, he feigned to scoff at his people. He hunted, and joyed in sledging home greater loads than the best of his neighbors. But that pleasure failed when he could not hear the comments of his audience.

Once or twice he sought solace among the white men, whom he hated. But here again his pride had a fall. For although the strangers made much of him, still, even in their presence, his own people grouped themselves apart. At last his spirit broke. His face lost the Eskimo plumpness. His haughty manner softened. He tried to win friends with presents, but the very attempt made matters worse. For, hearing that Megipsu's husband had been killed by a walrus, and that the widow was near starvation, he went out to the hunting grounds with his dogs and brought home to her a bear and such a load of seal as no three hunters in the tribe had ever killed in a single trip.

"No man alone could have done it," whis-

Laughter of the Sphinx

pered the Eskimos. "Evil spirits aid him to kill. He has magic powers. He could charm us to death!"

Megipsu left the food untouched. The children of the settlement lingered wistfully near it, when their parents were apart, and picked choice bits; but if Kalutanah came near with ivory toys, which he was ready to lavish upon them, they ran away. Their panic struck into the hearts of the parents. Kalutanah's haggard presence in the settlement cast a shadow upon the light hearts of the tribe.

There came a storm. Down from the interior snow desert swept the wind. It whirled the light snow up the cliff corners in clouds and columns, broke up the ice-fields in the bay, drove heavy floes crashing together and smashed the ship of the white men as if it had been a soapstone pot. Barely time had the strangers to throw a boat upon the ice before the floes parted and the fragments of the vessel went down to the Kokoia.

"Kalutanah has done it!" whispered the Eskimos.

But the white men laughed at this and

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hired Kalutanah with his dogs, for a rifle that shot many times without reloading, to help them in their boat-journey to open water in the south.

When they had won the southern cape of Eskimo land the white men invited Kalutanah to try his fortune in their country. But the Eskimo feared the sickness of the open sea. They landed him and his dogs near a village, said "goo' by," bent to their oars and tossed away over the waves.

Kalutanah gazed after them until the red beard was a far glint of fire.

"*Angoshueeta-ay!*" he murmured. "They stole my wife, yet they are my brothers. The strangers are my own people. Yet here, so far away, I may find friends. No word against me can have come hither. Who but myself and the white men could dare to journey so far across the broken ice of summer?"

He made his way up the foot-hill toward the peaked outlines of tents, dimly relieved against the brown cliffs behind. Half way to the crest he was aware of a young girl poised upon a rock. She had seen him;

Laughter of the Sphinx

apparently she was waiting for him. When he drew near she smiled, and her little white teeth flashed in the sunlight.

"*Chimo*, Kalutanah!" she said.

A greeting in his own tongue was a pleasure of which Kalutanah had been long bereft. He paused and stared at the maiden. She was tall and slender. She was still laughing and her teeth still shone.

"My name is not in your memory," she asserted. "I am Tung-wing-wa."

"Tung-wing-wa!" he repeated. "The child of Komenavik."

"I am a woman," she retorted, with an emphatic little nod. "Many suns have set since you saw me. I have become tall. I knew you because you are so great. I remember when, alone and without dogs, you killed the bear."

"You were a child," mused Kalutanah. "I carved a little bear for you, from the tooth."

Tung-wing-wa held up the thong that supported her breasts. The fastening was an ivory bear.

"That is it," she said. "My father is

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yonder, by his tent. He will make a feast for you. Will you come to meet him?"

Komenavik did indeed welcome his guest in the warmest Eskimo fashion, with a succulent narwhal flipper. Other Eskimos joined the feast, and before the sun had fallen to its lowest, Kalutanah found himself laughing. Not before since Padlungwa's death had he laughed.

Within five sleeps he was established in a tent of his own. He hunted with his usual success, gave food and skins to whomsoever lacked, and won the hearts of the villagers.

"Kalutanah is not as he was," said the old man. "Many suns ago he had the heart of a walrus, and we feared him. Now he has the spirit of a bear and the heart of a woman."

The finest pelts of the harbor seal fell to Tung-wing-wa. The maiden's supple figure showed charming in the most beautiful trousers in the land. Kalutanah watched her rapid needle as it pierced neatly together the skins which she tanned softer than those of other women.

She was unlike Padlungwa. She was

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not timid. She was readiest of all the Eskimos with her tongue. She made jokes even with Kalutanah, of whose dignity most persons stood in awe. Her little teeth were apt to flash out smiles; yet, when it was right, not Kalutanah himself wore a finer gravity.

Her sewing was celebrated. She made for Kalutanah a *koolatah* and a pair of boots that were perfectly waterproof. On the day when he first tried them he went hunting out upon the ice with Komenavik.

At first he lagged, unwontedly silent. Presently he made up to his companion:

"Who is betrothed to Tung-wing-wa?" he asked.

The aged hunter turned surprised eyes upon him.

"No one," he replied. "At her birth she was chosen to be the wife of Sipsu, of Karnah, then a boy; but when he came to take her to his tent she fled up the mountain. Until Sipsu went home she lived there—catching little auks in snares made of her hair. Her mind is not open to me. She said that Sipsu had but one eye. That is

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not a reason for refusing to be the wife of a good hunter."

For a few steps they plodded on in silence.

"What has my mighty son in his mind?" resumed Komenavik. "Does he want her for himself? Padlungwa is asleep forever, you say?"

For the first time in his life Kalutanah hesitated.

"I—I have lived many suns," he faltered. "A younger husband——"

"Many suns have taught you to be wise," answered Komenavik, gravely. "You are a great hunter. I have seen many more suns than you. I may never see another. I could go among the stars knowing that she would never need to strangle her baby to keep it from starving."

The subject was never resumed. A seal showed his black body at the water's edge and Komenavik stalked it and struck it. With the harpoon-head in its side it dived. A bight of the line, caught about his ankle, dragged the old hunter deep into the water. Kalutanah sprang to his aid and by his might

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hauled line, seal and hunter upon the ice. But the Kokoia had taken Komenavik.

Kalutanah carried the body home upon his sledge. At the landing-place, where the grass-covered hill rose from the bay-ice, he found several men of the settlement, waiting for news of the catch. They lifted Komenavik tenderly and bore him to the village.

Tung-wing-wa stood beside her tent. An aged Eskimo hobbled on before the others and spoke to her a few words. Her head twitched back, as if under a blow upon the brow, but she advanced slowly toward the sledge. Beside it she swayed and stretched forth a hand for support.

Kalutanah caught the hand. The little fingers closed tightly about his, and held them until Komenavik lay beside his door. For a long time after Tung-wing-wa had disappeared within the tent the hunter felt the clinging fingers upon his own.

Several sleeps passed before he saw her again. The Eskimos buried their dead neighbor and went about their business. Death is too familiar to everyone in that

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desolate land to make a lasting impression when it comes in ordinary fashion.

Komenavik's widow wailed in the presence of her friends for a season and presently forgot her grief in the tent of a widower of her own age. Tung-wing-wa kept her sorrow to herself behind the sealskin door-flap.

One night Kalutanah came down the mountain, late, from a reindeer hunt. His course led him near the pile of stones under which, with his weapons beside him, Komenavik lay asleep forever. Tung-wing-wa, with a hand upon the stones, stood and gazed out over the misty sea and the icebergs, gleaming cold in the light of the low sun.

Kalutanah stole toward her. As he drew near she looked up with wide eyes, but at once smiled faintly.

"Kalutanah?" she said.

He made no reply but gently took her hand, lifted her to her feet, and led her down the hill. She looked wonderingly, but ventured no protest. Among the tents, when he chose the way to his own instead of hers, she caught her breath and drooped her head low, but still suffered him, unresisting.

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Next day the news ran through the settlement. Everyone was pleased.

"Good," gossiped the villagers. "She is a strange girl. It is well that her man should be strong and silent. She will fear him as a woman should fear her husband. And she will never need food."

But the cold came early that season. It drove the walrus rapidly before it to the never freezing sea in the far south. Kalutanah killed but one out of the passing herd. Barely had the sun begun to dip below the horizon for a little time in every sleep, before the frozen ocean, like a flat, black rock, stretched out and out and out until it met the sky. Even the seals seemed to be chilled away from the land. Their breathing holes were few and far. Kalutanah, with his dogs, skimmed away and away until the world about them was a circle, with nothing but the icebergs to break the flatness and nothing but nicks in the sky to show where the mountains lifted their lofty crests. Often he returned with an empty sledge.

But these were the happiest times of his life. Tung-wing-wa bewildered him. Women

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were good for chewing skins until they were soft enough to make clothes; for seeing that the winter lamp was filled with oil; for bearing hunters who could keep the tribe from starving. All these functions, except the last, Tung-wing-wa filled better than any other woman Kalutanah had known, and he hoped the child she would give him in the summer might be a man-child.

But apart from these things Tung-wing-wa was not as other women. When men gathered in his stone house to talk over the hunting, Tung-wing-wa not only listened while she sewed, but also threw into the talk little opinions, so apt that the old men turned to look at her and to grunt approval. The aged *angekok* admitted that she saw the spirits. Once, when frost demons entered Kalutanah's foot she not only warmed it with snow, after the fashion of white men, but also, instead of calling the *angekok*, herself sang a charm-song, and so the devils vanished. Again, she suggested a likely bay for seal holes, and Kalutanah found two seals there. In spite of her winsome caresses and her swift obedience, she was more than any

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other women. Kalutanah held her in awe as well as in affection ; that was strange for an Eskimo husband. It gave him an unknown happiness.

But the time came when even Kalutanah's skill and Tung-wing-wa's intuition failed to provide more seal. A snow-storm whitened over the gloomy ice and covered the breathing holes. There was no more hunting. The sun ceased to peep above the southern mountains. The great hosts of the stars swept ceaselessly across the sky in review before the one star in the zenith that never moved. The moon rolled a silver rim above the white plains to the eastward, and dived, like a white whale, to rise higher and higher night after night. At last she ceased to set, and swung in wide circles above Eskimo land as a snowy owl circles above a traveller. Grotesque black shadow-shapes lurked behind the bergs, but the tips of ice sparkled with warm blue and silver fires.

Men, too, and dogs and sledges cast uncouth black images far across the whiteness. But men and dogs and sledges rarely went forth. The cold was abroad ; the silent spirit

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that worked its spell through furs and skin and stilled one's blood, without warning. The Eskimos slept and slept in their warm stone *igloos* and issued forth only to bring in meat from the frozen heaps near their doors, to cut ice for drinking water, and to call upon their neighbors.

The heaps of meat were small that season. One by one they sank away, and their owners had to dare the cold with sledge journeys to the north, where, during previous hunting seasons, they had stored seals and walruses beneath stones. At last Kalutanah's heap was lower than his dog-hut, and then the hunter did the bravest deed of his life. He harnessed his dogs to the sledge, called his wife, and set forth to his ancient home.

When they arrived at the northern settlement it was sleeping-time, and no one was stirring. The stone *igloo* where Kalutanah had lived with Padlungwa was dismantled. The hunter propped up the sleeping slab, laid the riding furs upon it and summoned Tung-wing-wa inside.

"The food is gone," he said. "I am going to bring more. My nearest store is half-a-

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sleep's journey away. Lie here until I return."

"What spirit is in you, Kalutanah?" remonstrated the woman. "You are silent; you do not eat. There is meat left for one sleep. Wait until you have eaten and rested. If you start forth without food the cold demon will take you."

"*Tatingwa!*" burst forth the hunter. "Obey me at once. I go to bring food."

Never before had he spoken harshly to her. She shrank away and stretched forth her hand as if to ward off a blow. He too started back, stared blankly for a moment, and crept hastily out through the passage.

He returned to the village with a heavy load of frozen meat. The moon, hovering above for her second period of the winter, shone full upon the hill. Kalutanah paused and drew a hoarse breath. Beside his *igloo* was gathered a dark mass of people. They were clattering vehemently; their voices sounded through the Arctic stillnesses to him, far out upon the ice.

Kalutanah set grim teeth and urged on his dogs. As he drew near the land the

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chatter ceased for an instant, then began, wilder than before.

"They have seen me," he muttered. "My guardian spirit is asleep."

The dark mass wavered to and fro for a moment and moved toward him. A single figure ran in advance of the others. It was his wife.

When she had almost reached him she faltered. Kalutanah halted. The crowd paused. For a moment the world waited in suspense.

"Kalutanah!" cried Tung-wing-wa. "Kalutanah! They say you killed her! It is a lie! It is a lie, is it not, Kalutanah?"

Kalutanah drew in his breath.

"It is a lie! Kalutanah! Did you kill her?"

Kalutanah cleared his throat. When he spoke his voice was husky and unsteady.

"Yes," he answered. "I killed her. She was——"

But a cry from the crowd cut off his speech. A woman turned and ran up the hill. The others swayed, broke, and, uttering shrill exclamations, scattered to their *igloos*. Tung-

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wing-wa fled with them. Her shrieks rang loudest of all.

Kalutanah stood motionless. The moon dipped behind the cliffs and left the valley in gloom. The dogs puzzled about until they found the meat, tore open the covering, wrangled over the prey, surfeited themselves, lay down and lolled out their tongues. The king-dog came and rubbed powerfully against Kalutanah's legs.

With a sudden movement the Eskimo bent over to caress the long, furred ears.

"Awuk!" he murmured. "Strong king of my pack! Good friend. You at least are faithful. You do not fear my seal-meat. Come," he resolved, once more erect, "come, Awuk, we will go to the south. We will find the white men. They are not afraid. We will live in their beautiful land, which they never cease to praise. I will kill seal for them; they shall never starve."

He gazed vaguely over the limitless wastes toward the south.

"It will be a long journey," he reflected.

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next bay I have a walrus. It will last two moons; surely that is enough."

Without a parting glance at the village he turned his dog-team westward toward the sea. The dogs plodded lazily, and paused to quarrel, after the instinct of their race. Kalutanah shot his whip-lash at them mechanically; mechanically staggered after the sledge.

"To the south!" he muttered. "To the south!"

They reached the mouth of the bay, and still he lurched blindly forward. The food he needed lay behind him, but he had forgotten it. Out beyond the firm bay they passed out upon the rougher surface of the sea. The ice around them groaned and cracked with the pressure of a heavy tide below. Once and again fissures yawned before the sledge. Vast floes, driven together, crumpled into fragments and heaved up walls in the path of the party; but Kalutanah drove his team at the mounds and lifted the sledge after them. Ordinarily it would have passed his strength, but he worked in a

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frenzy. The dogs ceased to shirk and tugged their load with backs level and heads down.

But their forces gradually waned, and at last the time came when they could not pull another pace. Even the terrible whip-lash failed to sting them forward. They crouched to their master's feet and lay, panting.

Kalutanah seized his rifle and pushed on alone. He swayed from side to side, lost his balance now and again, recovered himself, and hurried forward.

"To the south!" he repeated, "To the south!" He stumbled headlong into an ice-wall, and fell, in a stupor.

He waked with a consciousness of something unusual, and tried to rise. The cold spirit's hand was upon him. His fingers were numb and his feet were uncertain. Some moments elapsed before he could prop himself against an upturned floe and look about him.

The moon had risen. The ice-fields shimmered away to the dark cliffs. The tide was dead low. The ice had ceased to groan. Except for the snapping and crashing, here

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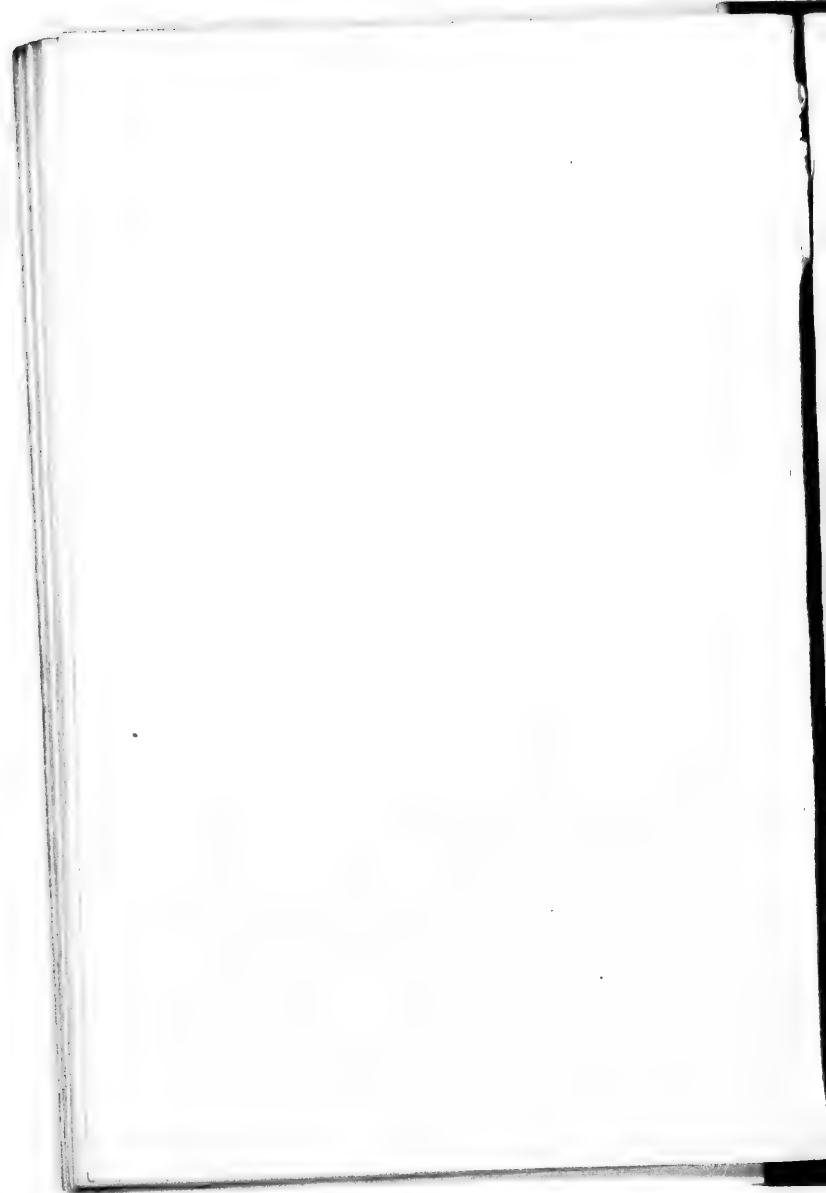
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Figures were moving across the sea.



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and there, of tips nipped from bergs by the terrible fingers of the cold, the universe held heavy stillness.

Out of the silences sounded the tone of a human voice. Kalutanah's blood spurted through every vein. He sprang to his feet and peeped over the mound.

Figures were moving across the sea; figures of men and dogs and sledges. One after another they rose over a wall of ice and descended toward the astonished Eskimo.

"From the westward!" exclaimed Kalutanah. "They cannot be our own people. Can they be white men?"

He crept into a little shadowed cave between the blocks, and waited.

The line trailed on until it reached the foot of his mound. The leaders halted, not ten paces from his nook. Kalutanah settled himself closer in the darkness. They were not white men. Yet they were taller than Eskimos.

The main party rested at the foot of the mound, apparently waiting for the rear to come up. One man mounted to the summit

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of the ice and stood gazing toward the eastern shore. The moonlight fell squarely upon his face. It was dark, like the faces of Kalutanah's people, but the cheeks and chin were traced with unnatural lines.

"The tattooed Eskimos!" gasped Kalutanah.

The figure faced about toward its comrades. The last of the line was moving over the further wall. The leader shouted in guttural Eskimo, barely intelligible to Kalutanah.

"No creature is in sight," he said. "The lazy men of the eastern land sleep. They fear the cold. We shall wake them. It is but a short journey and smooth ice. Forward!"

The band swept over the mound. Chilled as he was with fright, Kalutanah murmured low words of admiration at the alertness of their movements. White men themselves could not more easily have lifted sledges over the high-piled blocks.

They were all men—in number more than Kalutanah could tell off upon fingers and toes. They carried lances and bows,

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but no harpoons; certainly they were not hunting.

Supporting one hand upon a long lance of narwhal ivory, the leader stood erect until the last of the party were laboring down the eastern side of the hummock. He called another man to stand beside him and pointed towards the bay.

"There, in the shadow, you and the sledges must wait. We shall go forward quietly to surprise them. They will not fight; they are cowards. The men will flee. We will bring the food and the women to you."

They descended the slope and lost themselves in the mass of their party, now well together, and speeding fast away.

"Women!" gasped Kalutanah. "They will take the women! They will carry away Tung-wing-wa!"

He rose to his feet and gazed after the retreating party until it was a black shadow in the distance, like the shadow of a rapid cloud. The ice began to groan with the rising tide. Kalutanah's rifle, jarred from its rest, fell against the hunter's knee. He seized it and stole out of his hiding place.

Laughter of the Sphinx

Descending to the level ice, he lost sight of the band, but their sledge tracks were plain. Presently he came to the spot where his own sledge had been. The sledge and dogs were gone, but at hand lay a few pieces of his seal-meat. He devoured them eagerly, and the cold spirit went out of him.

An enormous iceberg from one of the mighty glaciers above, caught in its summer passage south by the cold, lay fixed just outside the mouth of the bay. As Kalutanah drew near the land, by making a slight circuit he was able to cover his advance with this berg. Suddenly above the groaning of the floes there rose a sound of wild screaming and shouting. The hunter stood motionless. Again and again came the sound; voices of women in terror and men in anger. Kalutanah rushed forward to skirt the towering berg. Near its end the soft waves had worn through the mass an arched passage. It had been half submerged and the sea had frozen in it like a floor. Into this arch Kalutanah entered and paused at the shoreward edge to reconnoitre.

The cries had ceased. The moon had

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almost set. Hidden in the dusk of the cliffs the bay lay silent. Kalutanah listened vainly. No sound told him what the darkness covered.

"Ugh!" he shuddered. "It is cold."

He made a few paces into the open. A form took shape in the darkness. An arrow whistled by Kalutanah's head and rebounded from the ice. Kalutanah sprang to his shelter. A laugh of derision followed him.

"Go back to your hole!" shouted a guttural voice. "You may save yourself, like the other cowards of your people."

Kalutanah levelled his rifle. But a word of command rang out of the gloom and the figure disappeared. Sounds of many voices followed and the trampling of feet upon the crisp snow crust of the shore. Into the dim moonlight advanced the band of strangers. They marched, not in regular column, as before, but in a careless mass, laughing and shouting. Behind them trailed the sledges, high with plunder. Last of all, guarded by a few of the tattooed tribe, emerged the Eskimos of the village. They were chiefly

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women, but here and there appeared the white bearskin trousers of a man.

Turning southward to pass the iceberg, the company approached within a harpoon's cast of Kalutanah's hiding place. The leader, whirling a long whip-lash, strode beside the prisoners.

"Get on!" he shouted. "You can run when you fear to fight. Get on!"

He sent his lash cracking into the crowd. A woman screamed.

"A—A—Ah!" roared Kalutanah.

He sprang from his cave with rifle unlifted. The captors halted and faced him.

"It's that coward who hid in the iceberg!" shouted a voice. "His fate is in this."

A bow twanged. An arrow buried its head in Kalutanah's thigh. The hunter staggered and clutched at the berg for support.

"Kalutanah! Kalutanah! Save me!"

A little figure broke from the group of prisoners and sped toward him. With a fierce exclamation the leader started in chase.

The pain of Kalutanah's wound vanished. The hunter stood erect, levelled his rifle and

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pulled the trigger. The leader stretched forth his arms, made a few headlong paces, fell in a heap, turned over once or twice, and lay still.

Kalutanah sprang forward.

"Coward do you call me?" he shouted. "Cowards yourselves! You fight women and children and harmless men! Dare not to stand before one who fears you not! Get back whence you came, you cowards!"

He threw his rifle to his shoulder and fired once, twice, and again. The crowd fell apart. The strangers rushed thither and thither in confusion.

"The white man's magic! The white man's death!" rose the cry.

Helter-skelter sped the terrified marauders, some north, some east, some south, and lost themselves one by one, amid the ice-hills.

Kalutanah staggered toward the groups of his people.

"Tung-wing-wa!" he exclaimed. "I have saved you. Where are you? Tung-wing-wa!"

But a new cry arose.

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"Do not touch him! Do not touch him! He is the Kokoia!"

Panic seized them. Huddling together, with unnatural shouts and cries, they turned their backs and fled.

"Tung-wing-wa! Do not leave me," cried Kalutanah. He dropped his rifle and made a few paces in chase of his people. His wounded leg failed, and he fell beside the dead leader of the strangers.

* * * *

In the next summer another ship, full of white men, came to what had been the northern village of Eskimo land. At the mouth of the bay, still stranded, lay the great iceberg. Upon the shore side, the floes, unbroken, bound it to the beach.

Black objects lay upon the floe and the white men landed to inspect them.

"They are dead men!" exclaimed the white man with the red beard. "Shot! Who would have thought of Huskies fighting! Ah, by Jove, this accounts for it. They are tattooed Eskimos from across Smith Sound! There has been a raid and I guess the raiders were thrashed.

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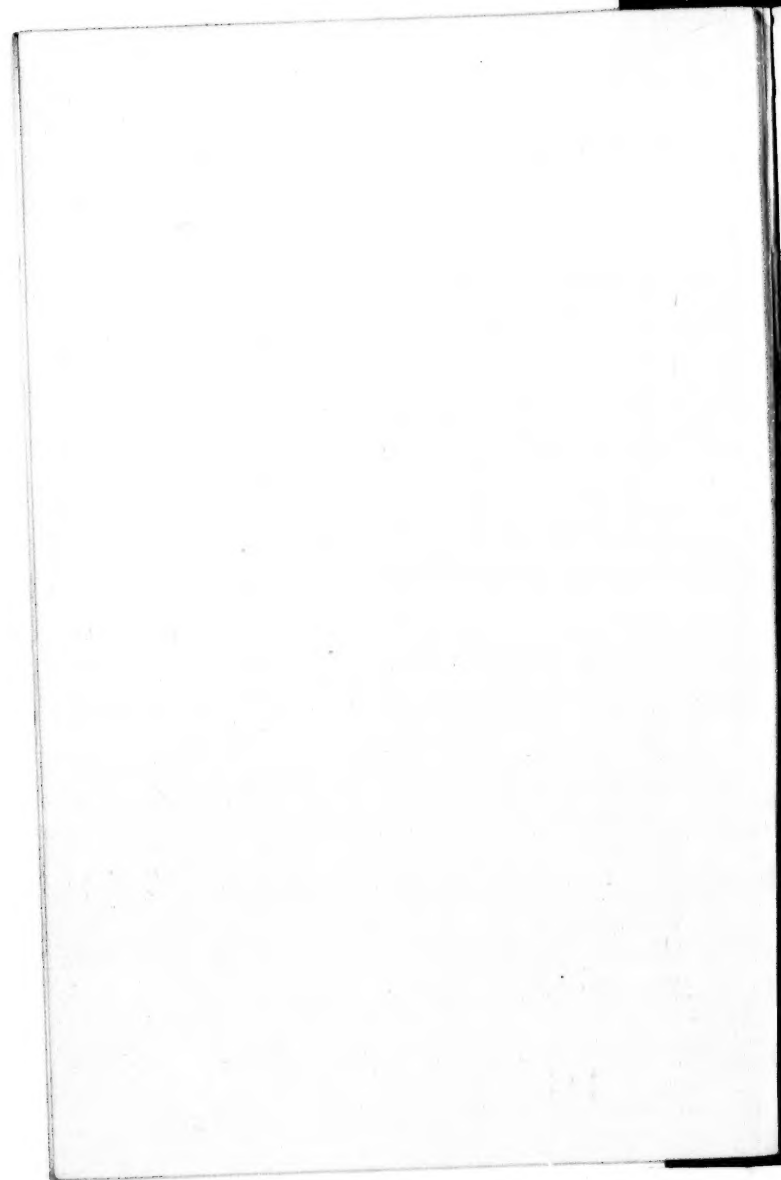
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"Here's one not tattooed," called another white man. "He's got an arrow in the leg, and a Winchester beside him."

"Greenlander most likely," responded the first. "Savior of his country. Let's see if I know him. By the gods, its Kalutanah!"

"What's the matter with you, Dutton?" asked a white man. "You're pale as a sheet. Is Kalu—what's-his-name, a friend?"

The white man with the red beard gazed toward the hill, where the outlines of wrecked *igloos* broke the round crest.

"Yes," he said at last. "I knew him."

THE END

